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CHAPTER 1

FAREWELL (DARLING)

It was Tuesday 3rd May 1977

At half past six I glanced at my watch and strained my ears for the familiar homecoming sounds of my husband, Shloma. At a quarter to seven I dialled the number of the Factory. I was surprised that the phone kept ringing and no reply. It was most peculiar. Someone should answer. Often, it was Samuel, the watch boy. My anxiety was growing. An uneasy feeling was growing at the pit of my stomach. If my husband was going to be late, he would 'phone to warn me.

I paced the room aimlessly and on impulse I decided to 'phone our very dear friend, Doctor Shapiro. I remember Shloma had a late appointment, undergoing treatment from an injury. The number was ringing and I thought about the assault when Arons, Shloma's business manager, had lost his temper again and had violently beat up my beloved husband.

My thoughts were interrupted by the gentle kind voice of Doctor Shapiro. I briefly discussed my growing anxiety and I felt alarmed when Doctor Shapiro confirmed Shloma had not kept his appointment.

A hot wave of panic swept over me. I said goodbye to Doctor Shapiro and held the dead 'phone in my hand. Trying to collect my thoughts I found myself dialling our lawyer. I heard him answer. My breathing was rapid. I started to tell him that I am afraid for my husband's safety. He knew about Arons' bad relationship with my husband. An urgent need to get to the Factory was growing. I remember telling our lawyer to get the Flying Squad and to send them to the Factory. He started trying to calm me with some logical explanation and in exasperation I put the 'phone down.

I am in a panic. I have no transport, the dinner is ready. Gertie, our maid is waiting to serve the food and go to her room. I phone my cousin. I am desperate to get to the Factory. I beg my cousin to come and fetch me.

Thankfully I put the phone down. I am relieved that I have some help. I run to the kitchen and instruct an astonished Gertie to wait till I return. I grab my keys and purse and race down the flight of stairs to wait for my cousin. I pace up and down the entrance of our building. I am terribly agitated. I can only think about the manager. I feel convinced that his



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previous threat to kill my husband has come true. If I had only the foresight to realize the danger. I know the manager in his evil, devious cunning ways will stop at nothing to succeed in overpowering my husband and gain power in the Factory. At last I see the shabby old red car of my cousin faithfully pull up alongside me.

We race as fast as possible to the Factory. I try to explain to my cousin my anxiety. I fill my cousin in on the latest details of the manager's treachery. We both agree that in the future Shloma should be cautious.

I instruct my cousin to approach the Factory from the back so that I can see if my husband's car is still there. As we get near the back entrance my eyes widen. The place is in darkness. That is strange. For security reasons the yard is always well lit. We stop the car. I jump out and shout my husband's name. I feel myself shaking. I desperately bang on the gate for the watchman. I repeatedly ring the bell. Eventually I try to climb the fence. The watchman appears from the dark. Frantically, I rain questions at him. I demand to know what is wrong. I stare at him in absolute shock. He is sobbing and shaking as he unlocks the gate. The watchman is unable to speak. I tear past him with my cousin close at my heels running towards the front entrance around the building.

Out of the corner of my eye I notice our car parked. Around the side of the building I run, and here at the front I almost stop dead in my tracks. The front parking is filled with police cars.

I quickly introduce myself as Shloma's wife and I push towards the entrance of the building. I am forcibly pushed back by a big policeman. I started to sob hysterically. Suddenly I am being dragged away towards a car, everyone around me is pushing me and I keep shouting, "I want my husband, he needs me". An officer tells me to calm down; an ambulance is going to take my husband away. Oh! dear God, I think to myself, what is happening? I try to tear myself from their hold. I am pushed into a police car and locked in. My nerves just snap and I scream and beat wildly on the car window. I see my cousin standing passively with the crowd of policemen. I strain my neck to see a group of policemen hurrying out of the building carrying a man. I recognize my husband. He is on a stretcher. I scream even louder. I turn into a wild animal. I can't believe this is happening. I am not allowed to be with him. I cannot understand anything. They lift my husband into a waiting ambulance, and cover his whole body. Stunned I watch the red lights

on the back of the ambulance fade as they drive away.

The police turn their attention towards me in the car. The car is unlocked and I am helped out and led towards the Factory. Reality dawns on me, suddenly I feel the deep pain of my loss - my husband is dead.

I ask myself but how and why? A man introduces himself as a Major General and I am asked to find the keys for the Factory. Shocked and devastated I stumble into Shloma's office. I notice papers strewn all over the floor. It all seems so terrible and strange. I find the keys on my husband's desk together with his car keys. The Major comes into Shloma's office and asks me for my husband's nephew's telephone number. Shocked, I stare into his face. I cannot speak.

Much later I am taken home. My cousin gently helps me into my flat. I feel so numb and in a state of disbelief. For a long time I wander into all the rooms aimlessly. Suddenly the door bell rings and I hear a loud insistant knocking. I feel a terrible panic flow through my body.

Our maid opens the door to a sea of faces belonging to the press. I am pushed into the lounge and people, strange people, start asking me questions. I am unable to answer. Life feels like a violent nightmare. I cannot focus. I cannot speak or comprehend.

The following morning I lay in bed and my heart felt as if it was bursting from grief. The phone kept ringing, people were knocking on the door, reporters flooded into the privacy of my home. I lay in bed and felt as if I could not move a limb. Chaos, voices shouting, hungry for details, stripping me of my identity. Photographers were climbing over each other to get my picture. Yes, it was almost bizzare; an innocent man had been killed. Was it murder? A big question mark hung over our home.

My husband's secretary was hustled into my bedroom. From relief I wept and clung to her hand. Mrs Skinner held me close in her arms, and gently caressed my head. I felt like a baby in a mother's arms - a wonderful feeling I'd almost forgotten, as I had lost my parents in the Holocaust. Mrs Skinner expertly shielded me from the onslaught of the press. In a blur I remember her answering their persistant questions. The police arrived at about a quarter to eleven. I started to shake violently. They

needed me to identify my husband's body. I couldn't, somehow the thought of seeing Shloma dead frightened me. I started to sob, it was an agonizing decision.

Eventually, Shloma's friend, a police sergeant went to identify him. People were coming in and out of the flat. I suddenly needed to be alone.

I grabbed my handbag and fled into the suburb of Yeoville to go to the bank. I walked down Raleigh Street with tears coursing down my cheeks. I kept walking, choking back my sobs of pain. I lost my way but eventually found the Bank. I had made up my mind to take Shloma home to Israel. He was a Palestine citizen when I married him in 1948. I wiped away my falling tears. Yes, I thought he would be happy to rest in peace with his deceased father in Israel.

Resolutely I made my way home. I telephoned our Rabbi to make the necessary arrangements. Time slipped by very quickly. I hurried the next day to the Travel Agent to take travel documents. I felt very bitter. A month ago we had excitedly planned to go to America. Shloma had made contact with relatives he had lost touch with. We would have celebrated our wedding anniversary in Minnesota. The money we had so carefully saved for this grand occasion was to be used for Shloma's funeral arrangements. I clutched my purse to my heart and closed my eyes, for life had cheated me.

The arrangements for the funeral had been finalized. I prepared myself for a long lonely journey to Israel. My ticket and travel documents had been hastily prepared and after the memorial ceremony at Westpark Cemetary I was flying straight to Israel.

The Rabbi gave a very deep and moving speech at the ceremony. In my dazed state I felt time rushing past. According to the Jewish law, Shloma was to be buried as soon as possible. (The post mortem results at that time were unknown, they were finalized at the court hearing that was to follow on my return.)

I stood near the closed coffin and slowly glanced around at the crowd of people who had come to pay their last respects.

I left for the airport with quiet misgivings.



Sitting in the car on the way to the airport I opened my handbag to check my travel documents and found an envelope that had been given to me at the funeral. It was from dear friends. I started to read the letter. It began " Dear friend Chana, " I smiled, Chana was an Israeli term for Hanna, my name.

When we arrived in Tel Aviv I was ushered through customs without any problems. Arrangements for Shloma's body were made and I was met by his relatives. I was taken to their home and very wearily I lay down to sleep. I awoke the next day and felt the tension of my grief return.

The funeral was to take place at midday. With deep sadness that seemed to chill the core of my bones I prepared myself. At the funeral I stood numb and silent. Life seemed so hopeless. I had lost so many dear relatives and never went to their funerals.

Leaving the burial place I returned to Shloma's family and spent the next eight days according to my Jewish custom in mourning. We sat on little low benches each day. After the eighth day I left for Jerusalem to stay with friends. In thirty days I returned to Shloma's grave for a memorial service and then I would go home.

7.5. 1977

3 - 11 th Avenue,
LOWER HOUGHTON
Johannesburg

Dear friend Chana,

I was shaken to the depth of my being by the terrible news of the untimely, violent death of my dear friend Shlomo.

Like an unextinguishable flame, so does an inconsolable grief occur. To find words of consolation in these circumstances is absurd and meaningless.

To lose such a friend and husband as Shlomo is a deep sorrow and therefore the aim of this letter is only to express to you my wife's and my deepest condolences.

I have known you for 22 years, when you just arrived in this country and it seems to me, that I am one of your friends, who feel close to you now.

I saw Shlomo very often in my office, when he used to spend hours in the library next door, working out the court proceedings and used to see him often not far from his business premises and we used to have long discussions on different topics and so I have had the opportunity to recognise in him a wonderful human being. He loved life, people, and his outlook on life was full of light and joy.

Each of his visits to my office was a pleasure for me. In the course of my long life I have not met many people as him and Shlomo stands out as being notable for his humanism, generosity and his moral qualities. Remembrance of him will remain as one of the brightest memories of my life.

In the Russian language there is an expression: "The earth should be light upon him." and repeat this expression and only add, that it will be the holy earth of Israel, which he loved so much.

My wife and I embrace you and wish you strength of spirit to bear your tragic loss.

Shocked by your terrible loss.

Ethel and Eliya Abramovith

Sitting in the airoplane staring out of the window I looked at the blue sky and it reminded me of a summer sky on a clear day in Russia.

I settled back in my seat and closed my eyes and thought about my life when it began.

(See continuation)

CHAPTER 2

THE UKRANIAN SUMMER

1919

I & 2

I first saw the light of day on April 20th 1916, in the town of Lugansk in Russia.

It is little realized how large a part history plays in the lives of people, and how they are tossed about like logs in a storm at sea by unexpected events.

My family were from a little town called Popelian in Lithuania. In 1915 my parents had left Popelian with great haste and with deep regret. My father had established himself in a material shop which sold both wholesale and retail. At the time that they left Popelian my mother was pregnant with me. Our family consisted of six children.

World War I had broken out in 1914 and the Tzar, our ruler decided in his wisdom, that as Jews were spies of the enemy they should all be moved into the heart of Russia, where they could do the least damage.

A wave of panic swept over Popelian. The Tzar's soldiers were attacking the nearby little towns and chasing the Jews out of their homes. With fear clutching their hearts my family packed little of their belongings and on a horse drawn cart began the long journey. People were fleeing in the hundreds. Women carrying babies and leading their children on foot walking to escape the onslaught of the Tzar's army. This was nothing new in our experience, for as Jews, we had been wanderers over the face of the globe for centuries. Many of the refugees who had joined the massive exodus were virtually destitute with little money and food. My family had relatives in Riga, the capital of Latvia, and my father decided to spend a few weeks there as my mother's condition was very poor.

In Riga my father learned that our final destination was to be in the Province of Ukraine, a long distance from Riga. My mother had gained a bit of strength and accepted our ill fated situation.

x It would have probably been impossible for my father to be able to support the whole family, but my sister Bertha who lived in Leningrad and was married to a tradesman - tradesmen were permitted to live in Leningrad - foresaw the difficulties my father would have encountered. She invited my two eldest brothers and eldest sister to stay with her.

My mother was very grieved to be separated from my two eldest brothers and sister and cried bitterly. However after they arrived in Leningrad and stayed for some time with my sister Bertha they were chased out of Leningrad because young Jewish students were not allowed to live in the capital of Russia. However, special yellow passports were issued to young Jewish prostitutes allowing them to live in the capital of Russia.

My eldest brother Boris got a job in Samarkand, my second eldest brother got a bursary to attend High School in Pokrofs and my sister came to Lugansk to stay with my parents. At a later stage our relative, Grusenberg who lived in Lugansk managed to obtain a special permit for my sister to go and live with my other sister Bertha in Leningrad as her servant. x

My family arrived in the Ukraine during the summer and the climate was almost subtropical, the farms and countryside was green and rich in agriculture. At a town called Lugansk my father decided to settle. I was born on a hot summers day 20th April 1916.

Our home was a humble little room in Lugansk. My father found a relative of his, a man called Oscar Grusenberg. We were very grateful to Oscar Grusenberg who helped us a great deal and proved to be a very valuable friend. Grusenberg at that time was an active revolutionary. A qualified lawyer with strong political convictions. Grusenberg's friendship was like a light of hope in such troubled times. Oscar Grusenberg later became a famous political figure in the history of the revolution.

During my first year of life my family and all the other Jewish people in Lugansk were constantly living in fear of the violent bands of Cossacks who frequently plundered and raped our villages. The revolution was gaining momentum and life was very unstable. This situation forced the Jews to seek safety in the forest adjoining the town. I was only nine months old and according to my mother I was very feverish and spent most of the time in a delirious sleep. This was very fortunate for our safety, if the Cossacks were nearby any sound we made would have given our place of hiding away.

News of our plight reached Jews, living in the neighbouring village of Ivanovka, who came to our aid. We were hurried to the safety of a Synagogue in carriages. People from the village brought food and we were given a temporary place to sleep.

My family found a room and we began to pick up the threads of our disjointed lives. My father found work with a textile merchant, he received a very low salary because he was not fluent in Russian, our home language was Lithuanian. A few weeks later we moved into a house in a Russian neighbourhood. We were the only Jewish family living in the street. It proved to be a lucky move as the Cassacks seldom raided the non-Jewish quarters.

A year later my father decided to leave for the town Saratov, a long distance away. Saratov was in Russia and was a fast developing town. My father planned to buy clothing to send to my mother to sell in Ivanovka which was part of the Ukraine. It was a sad time, our family separated temporarily only to be joined together over Jewish holidays.

Selling clothes was a full time job and my mother left me in the care of the widow's children who owned the house we were living in. She had two boys. I remember them with joy and love, the little boys Vin aged five and Petka aged three. They were the best little friends I ever had. I was then a tiny toddler and left alone in their care, yet I was so secure, our days were a constant mixture of joy and happiness. Each day my mother would leave me at their house with a loaf of bread, milk and a jar of honey. I grew to love the two little boys, they were so precious to me. These children were my only companions and friends for many years to come.

I remember their house was situated on a hill with a beautiful colourful garden with flowers and fruit trees. There was a little stream that flowed down in the bottom of the garden. All day we would play with the dog Koutka who patiently obeyed each repetitive trick we taught him.

During the cold winter when everything was frozen over we used to slide down the hill to the stream on a sleigh. Vinka the eldest was in the front, I the baby in the middle and Petka at the back behind me. Clinging tightly together, shrieking with laughter we would sleigh down the stream. When the two boys went to the local school, it seemed the most natural thing in the world for me to go with them.

The school opened with the saying of prayers, and as I had no idea that my religion was different from that of the other children, I naturally fell into the habit of repeating what I heard. I was eager to please and a

tender three year old, I was soon able to chant my prayers learnt from school on my own. One day a tragedy struck our little world, Petrushka the mother of our dog Koutka died. Deeply grieving we set about the preparations of an honourable funeral for the dog. Three children were not enough for a procession so all the neighbourhood children were called upon to attend. With loving care Vinka wrapped the body of Petrushka in a soft cloth. Petka and I collected flowers. In grave silence we marched to the bottom of the garden and put our beloved Petrushka to rest. I was the youngest of the children and it was my job to conduct the prayers. With my little hands clasped tightly in prayer, I stood proudly in front of the children and prayed.

One day the Headmaster noticed me at school. He looked at me with a frown and suddenly placed a book in front of me and asked me to read. All the children turned to stare at me. As I did not even know the alphabet I just kept silent. I stared at Vinka helplessly. The Headmaster realized I was unable to read, he then asked me how old I was. I whispered that I was four. He didn't hear and bent his head nearer to me, I was a little frightened and managed to gesture with my hand my age. With that the Headmaster walked away.

My mother was summoned to the school. The Headmaster felt I was too young. After much pleading the Headmaster relented and agreed to me staying on. The next few days were spent in great fever. Vinka sat for hours patiently and with painful repetition teaching me to read and write.

Christmas time was getting nearer with great excitement I impatiently waited for Petka and Vinka's mother to put the Christmas tree in the front window and decorate it. The Christmas activities in Petka and Vinka's house held such a wonderful fascination for me. My favourite treat were the strange and beautifully painted eggs that Vinka's mother used to give us. This was an event that happened in the middle of each year called Easter. A special easter cake called Poshka was baked. Each child was given a generous slice to eat. With great care I used to chew each mouthful slowly hoping to make this delicious cake last for ever.

Our two households were very close. My mother would treat Vinka and Petka as her own children. When my father and my eldest brother came home for the Jewish Holidays, my mother would be busy preparing special food. She used to press her own wine, and bake traditional cakes.

Our house was cleaned with vigour and I was scrubbed from head to toe. It was a wonderful moment when our family was joined together. I loved my father with devotion. I would press my chair as close to his as possible and absorb every word he spoke. I would be content to sit near him and watch his face in adoration. My mother always seemed to be smiling when my father was at home.

Trouble with the Cossacks and the Jews was rising again. My eldest brother Grisha came home with the news that bands of Cossacks were coming to the village. My mother was afraid for our safety. Grisha got involved with the local Jewish Organisation and started doing shift work at night guarding the Jewish Quarters. It was then decided that I would attend another school in Ivanovka. The school was founded by Princess Tatiana, the eldest daughter of the Tzar Nicolas the II. This was a better school and my brother felt my obvious scholastic ability would have much greater scope there. With great reluctance I entered the school. It was then I discovered the cruelty of children. I was a refugee from Lithuania, my family took cover in the Ukraine Valley in this town and I was Jewish. The children at school were from good homes and they felt superior to me. The children would call me " Bazenki " meaning - Refugee Girl. My classmates attitude changed slowly once I began to prove my ability in my studies. I began to concentrate industriously on my school work.

The Cossack forces were getting more and more violent plundering from the people. Food became scarce and life was difficult. My family eventually decided to leave. We packed our belongings into a horse drawn cart. The farewell to Petka and Vinka was of mixed feelings. I was sad to leave my two best friends but at the same time we believed we would be together again.

It was in the year of 1922 once again the whole family were on the road and the entire contents of our household were piled high onto carriages and we set off from Ivanovka on a long journey to ~~Novogorod~~ Novegrad we hoped to catch a train that would take us out of the Ukraine. My mother, brother and sister walked in front carrying pieces of luggage, whilst I, now about six years of age, clung to my father's trousers as we walked slowly alongside the carriage. My father carried a heavy suitcase in his hand and walked in grave silence.

It was in the middle of summer a beautiful time to be travelling through

the green countryside of the Ukraine. I felt a great sense of happiness and excitement, little did I realize the grave implications and difficulties that lay before us.

I hung on to my father's trouser leg and chatted excitedly about the surroundings that I hardly noticed the difficulty my father had in walking with the heavy suitcase and me hanging on. A Russian woman walking behind us came up and offered to hold my hand and walk with me, my father agreed. Eagerly I took her hand and spent the rest of the time walking and talking with enthusiasm. We eventually reached the Station in the Ukraine. At this stage the rest of the family were a bit ahead of us. I was still with my new found friend, the Russian woman. We came to the station and my father walked up to the Russian woman to take me and to my surprise the woman began to protest loudly. The Russian woman objected saying I was her child. I was dumbfounded, I tried to wriggle my hand out of her firm grasp. This led to a loud argument which drew a crowd of onlookers. A railway policeman arrived on the scene and having heard the woman's story naturally agreed that I was her child.

My mother and the rest of the family had hurried towards the waiting goods train and like many of the refugees on the overcrowded platform wanted to secure a place for their families so that they could travel together. The conductor blew the whistle and the engine roared into life. People began scrabbling towards the train. My mother was becoming anxious as we had failed to join them. She came to look for us. I was still standing captivated by the Russian woman's firm grip and almost in tears. The moment I saw my mother's face pushing through the crowds a wonderful feeling of relief swept over me and I forcefully tore myself free and ran into her arms. The situation was immediately settled and we hurried towards the departing train.

The only transport available in our time of plight was the goods train, which was faster than by road. All the Jewish families pooled their money to pay for goods carriages. We had a long distance to cover to get out of Ukraine border and this was the cheapest way. The conditions on the goods train was far from luxury but in our hearts the inconvenience of being couped up under such poor conditions left us feeling grateful.

We continued our journey by train and were met again at one of our stops by Jews living in the town who took us to a Synagogue where food was

brought to us. A woman offered to take me home and give me some hot milk and a comfortable bed. To my horror my mother agreed. Against my wishes I was taken to a strange home.

The next morning when we were all together we boarded a train for Kharkhov. In Kharkhov Station a dismal scene greeted us, we saw many Jewish families refugees like ourselves from the Ukraine. We spent a week on the overcrowded railway station sleeping on the floor with little to eat.

I slept next to the luggage scale. When the Railway Attendant was busy weighing luggage he would gently push me out of the way and when he had finished he gently pushed me back again.

My parents were in a dismal state. As refugees we were forced into the goods sections of the station and prohibited from the passenger section. The atmosphere was gloomy and almost desperate as hundreds of families huddled together around their luggage on the floor waiting indefinitely. My parents grumbled about home, I associated home with food. I was constantly hungry and restless. During the day I would escape for a while and sneak across the station to the passenger side. If I was caught I would be chased back. I loved to run to the buffet on the First Class section of the station and press my nose against the window and stare longingly at the delicious assortment of cakes spread out on a long table. I would dream of home where home was, I had no idea, but when we reached home I promised myself I would be able to eat cakes and sandwiches. On one occasion I was standing with my nose pressed to the window looking at the food with great concentration, one of the station attendants motioned to his colleague to chase me away. I got such a fright that I bolted off with the speed of lightning back to my family. I felt greatly humiliated.

The train finally arrived and with relief we started our journey to Gomel. At Gomel we had to stop, when we were forced to flee from the Ukraine, my father had no permit or any travel documents. It was an anxious moment for us. Some of the passengers who were fortunate to have documents carried on their journey. We approached the Jewish Organisation who in turn applied to the Commandant who issued permits. The Commandant being a kindly man issued our permits without difficulty.

We eventually reached the Lithuanian Border town of Koshodar where by sheer luck we met a business acquaintance of my father who helped my

father with the immigration. Hundreds of Jews were applying for immigration and the Government Officials were most unsympathetic. A lot of irregular deals were made to obtain official permission to enter Lithuania. We were granted immigration papers and our destination was Popelian. We fled Popelian in 1915 when Russia and Germany went to war. We returned to Popelian in Lithuania as the political uprising of the revolution in Russia was growing and the Jews were the first to bear the brunt of discontentment.

Oscar Osipowich Grusenberg was born in Ekaterinoslav- now Dniepropetrovsk in the year 1866 a lawyer and a social worker. He studied at university of Kiev .On completing the study he was offered a chair at university on condition of his accepting christianity ,which he refused.

(As a Jew he has no right to occupy such post).One of the most distinguished jurists of his time ,he was obliged to practice for sixteen years as an assistant to a jurist.He dealt not with criminal cases only, but and preferably with cases concerning politics or intellectuals, such as his defence of the authors Korolenko, M.Gorky, Tshukovsky as well as P.Milikoff and L.Trotsky.It was he ,who defended Armenia nationalists as well as the 160 deputies of the state Duma ,who were accused of plotting revolt. in protest against disbanding the first Duma before the appointed time. He was especially known for his involvement in specific Jewish affairs particularly during notorious pogroms in Kishinev and Minsk.(1900-1902) ~~the~~ the affairs of Dashevsky and D.Blondes. accused of ritual murder. and especially the Beilis process, where his brilliant defence was most impressive and in which he compared Russia with medieval Spain.

He participated actively in Russian political life. For some time he was a member of the Kadet party and put his candidature in the election of the second state Duma, but he was not elected, but he was always ready to help with his advice during the 2nd and 3rd Dumas.

In 1917 he came into contact with sionists and he was elected with six other candidates to the Jewish branch of the constitutional assembly.

In 1918-1919 years during the revolution Grusenberg has been at the head of Jewish self defence organisation as well, as rendering help to the victims of pogroms.

He left Russia in 1920 and lived in Berlin. From 1926-32 he lived in Riga and in 1929 he became a representative of Latvian Jews in the Jewish agency, becoming a member of this organisation.

^{La} Last years of his life were spent in France, where he published his memoirs "Yesterday". His speeches and articles about him were published after his death in a book "Grusenberg"

He died in 1950 and according to his will was buried in Israel.

L I T H U A N I A

C H A P T E R

III

On our arrival in Popelian, a scene of total destruction greeted us. What was once our beautiful house was now a mass of rubble. If anything had been left intact, it had been removed by the Germans, not a brick was left behind.

Our first major task was to seek accommodation. This was extremely difficult, since most of the town had been destroyed. We were lucky enough to find board and lodgings temporarily with another family. As my family had little money at this stage, we wrote a letter asking for help from our relatives living in South Africa. Shmuel and Max Odess, my father's nephews were kind enough to send us some money. With their help, we were able to set about the next major task of rebuilding a small house on our land.

Slowly, we began to pick up the pieces and build up our lives again. Our home was small and humble, but the feeling of love and affection was great. My parents had returned to the place of their ancestors, and they were very happy. For the first time in my life, I was experiencing a proper family atmosphere. I myself soon forgot the horrible, hungry journey to Lithuania.

My father began a small business. He opened a little shop in one of the front rooms of our house, where he sold groceries and goods, such as material for clothing. My mother would help in attending to customers. There was a big brass bell that would ring every time a customer entered the shop. With great curiosity, I would peep around the corner to see who had arrived. The Lithuanians in Popelian were very friendly traditional people and they used to speak to my father about all sorts of interesting things. I was often there to catch some snatches of gossip.

My mother would be the first to rise every morning, to make a fire and boil the water for our breakfast. Our kitchen was one of my favourite spots. It was the biggest room in the house, but furnished very simply. In the winter I loved to curl up on the hearth and watch the flames while my mother was cooking. I always looked forward to eating "Gritchicha" which was part of our breakfast tradition.

Often, my father would travel to "Shavel", a large town nearby, to buy stock for the shop. On his return I would eagerly wait for him to unpack his wares because invariably I was rewarded with something. It was always a surprise but most times I would get pears, my favourite fruit and a delicious treat. On one occasion my father returned from Shavel late and arrived home very

tired. To my disappointment I learned that he had forgotten my present. My disappointment turned to anger and I ran to hide under the dining room table and refused to be coaxed out. I was the youngest in the family and therefore a little bit spoiled. At times I could prove to be a difficult child.

Once, my parents and I were invited to a wedding. My mother decided to make me a new dress. My parents were discussing which material to use, while I ran to the shop to look through the rolls of cloth. Finally I chose a lovely pink tafetta. But my mother had other ideas about the dress. Nothing could go to waste, and since there was already a remnant of cloth left in her workroom, that was to be my new dress.

My magical feeling began to fade. My dress was to be made from leftover cloth and not from that beautiful roll of cloth in the shop. Hot tears stung my eyes and I started to cry. My mother put her arms ^{GENTLY} around me to comfort me and I thought perhaps I would still get my way. The dress was made as originally planned. On the day of the wedding, as much as my father tried to cheer me up, I insisted on looking glum. Although I knew that the dress was quite beautiful, I could not admit it. I agreed it was beautiful and shyly stated that it was a remnant, and that it was not right to use a remnant for my dress. My parents looked into each other's eyes and smiled.

My great grandmother was a very noble and righteous woman. My mother would tell me wonderful and very colourful stories about her. In the bottom of my heart I had a feeling of great respect mixed with fear. If I was naughty my mother would tell me that her grandmother had appeared in her dreams asking her why I was so spoilt. So, very often before committing a bad deed, I would hesitate and visualize my great grandmother appearing before my mother in her dreams. The feeling of her presence and the very thought that maybe from high above, she was watching me, would often conquer my impulse to steal a little cake.

My great grandmother was a much loved woman in the town of Lucknick. She was well cared for by her sons who sent money regularly from Moscow. Part of this sum was donated to charity and she became a helping friend to most of the local community. When she died of old age a great wave of grief flooded through the town. Shops and all the business in the town came to a halt and the people went into mourning. Her sons were met at the station when they arrived at the town from Moscow by a crowd of tearful people. I would cry in private when my mother related the story of that memorable day.

One of my great grandmother's sons was called Wolf. He was a very famous eye specialist. Wolf was in a very honourable position, working for Tzar Nicolas the 1st who had a very poor eyesight. The Tzar generously granted special permission for the eye specialist to live in Moscow. At that time Jews were forbidden to live or own property in Moscow. Only a few chosen and very privileged Jews who had received some kind of merit for work were allowed to take up residence in Moscow. This particular uncle fell into favour with the Tzar and was later given an honorary title as General, which was also unusual. A Jew was not allowed to bear a title unless he denounced his religion and converted to christianity.

When the coronation of Tzar Nicolas the 2nd took place in Moscow, Wolf was in the fourth carriage of the procession. When Wolf retired Tzar Nicolas the 1st gave him a farm in Kiev as a kind gesture. When Wolf died Tzar ordered all businesses to be closed in Kiev during the time of the funeral procession. He sent a representative at the funeral on his behalf.

Sian the other son was equally fascinating. He studied in Moscow and became very well known in the financial circles. A brilliant businessman strongly associated with Brotzki the most famous economist in Russia. They became partners. Sian was older than Wolf and it was during the most prosperous time of his career that the Tzar passed the law that all Jews living in Moscow must denounce their religion in favour of christianity or else evacuate their residence.

Sian chose to leave Russia, and settle in Dresden in Germany. On arrival in Germany he successfully started a bank and, later met one of the beautiful daughters of the famous Rothchild family and married her.

The third son Moses lived in Oddessa and devoted most of his time to the social welfare of the local Jewish community. He was known to donate up to 50 000 ruples a year to the Helping Hand Society. Charity work featured very strongly in his career and he became a much loved and respected citizen in Oddessa.

Looking through the eyes of an eight year old, I saw my mother as a beautiful woman who wore the most wonderful clothes. More than often she wore a long skirt with a bussel extending her slim waist. My favourite outfit was a long red velvet skirt she wore with a beautiful delicate finely embroidered silk blouse with exaggerated muttonchop sleeve, buttoned high up to her neck. Her long blond hair was coiled high up on to her head in a knot.

I would look at her with loving admiration and dream. In my mind only married women dressed like my mother. I thought if one got married then the husband had to buy the wife a red velvet skirt and a delicate silk blouse. I just could not wait to get married. Then I would become as beautiful as my mother.

Shortly after my ninth birthday my eldest brother Boris came home from Samarkand. I felt so happy and excited about being with him. I was very fond of him. He was living and working in "Samarkand", the heart of Russia. He had a good nature and I loved to listen to his political viewpoints.

Grisha my second elder brother living in Moscow had landed in prison for political reasons. As a young student in Moscow he spent a lot of time with a group of students who were great followers of Kerensky. Kerensky had fallen out of favour with his colleagues for his non-communist ideas. The political atmosphere in Moscow at the time was electric, communism was gaining momentum. Many people were unemployed and homeless. The idea of equality was appealing. Unfortunately, Grisha was caught writing articles strongly attesting to communist ideas. He ended up in the central prison in Moscow, where he spent a long cold winter.

When he returned home, soon after Boris, he was very thin and ill, and bitterly disillusioned. He spent most of that spring in bed while my mother constantly worried about his condition. He had been badly beaten and many a night he would wake up in a violent fever shouting out in emotional torture. His terrible experience in Moscow left us all feeling depressed.

Grisha recovered and was soon eager to do something industrious. Popelian was a very small town and held little interest for Grisha. He finally decided to go to Kovno, the capital of Lithuania. There he worked for a Russian newspaper called " ECHO ". Lithuania had just adjusted to her independance and Grisha became very active in the political circles. Boris followed Grisha to Kovno and joined him at the newspaper.

On these occasions when my brothers came home to visit, they would often invite some of their colleagues and musician friends. This was my very exciting time. I would sleep in the kitchen and the guests would sleep in my room.

I loved to hear them all talking, argueing and protesting politically. I would absorb all their ideas and information like a sponge. And, when I was with my friends, the local children in the neighbourhood, I would repeat what

I had heard. I gave the impression to my friends, who were absolutely fascinated, that these were all my own ideas. It made me feel very knowledgeable and important when all the children would gather around me, eager to hear my stories.

Then the matter of my education engaged the attention of my mother and father, and it was decided that I join a Hebrew High School in a town called Shavel. This, however, did not work out at all because I was strongly opposed to attending a Hebrew school.

When I was at school in Ivanovka, I was amongst christian children. I did not feel any difference, in fact I felt as if I belonged. Even though I was known amongst the children as a refugee girl ^(BEZENKA) I was accepted. One of my teachers was a wonderful and cultured woman. She spoke often~~ly~~ about the arrogance of the Jewish nation. I did not feel indignant I accepted her prejudice without questions. I did not feel that I was part of her prejudice.

My father had found accommodation for me at a family that had a daughter of my age, who was also attending Hebrew school. Although my father promised to come and visit me on his trips to Shavel, I was still very unhappy about leaving my comfortable environment. Fighting back my tears, I waved goodbye to my mother, and without looking back I got onto the wagon that would take me on my journey.

The family in Shavel welcomed me into their home. By this time, I was very curious to meet Raya, their youngest daughter. To my delight we became instant friends. I shared a bed in a small room with Raya. I quickly adapted myself to their way of life, and the pain of parting from my family was soon forgotten.

Even though I felt comfortable with Raya's family, the situation at school was completely different. I had difficulty in adapting. My main problem was the language. Most of the children at school were familiar with Hebrew and Yiddish, both of which were totally foreign to me. Having been born and raised in Russia, my mother tongue was Russian. My parents spoke both Russian and Lithuanian languages, their main one being Lithuanian.

In Popelian they had arranged for a private teacher to teach me and, therefore I was able to read and understand Lithuanian quite well. I felt trapped and confused. Finally my parents came to my rescue, they arranged with the

Headmaster that my examinations should be written in Russian. It was a relief for me but in the same token it singled me out from the rest of the children. I withdrew socially from my classmates. I was nicknamed the " RUSHKE " and was often made the victim of their games and jokes.

My desire to study decreased and my school work deteriorated rapidly. At the end of each day when the school bell rang, feeling relieved, I would be only too glad to run out of the gate to meet Raya so that we could walk home together. Once in the warmth of their home, my confidence returned and I would feel happy and secure again.

My progress at school distressed my parents. They struggled to keep me at the Hebrew school for three years, but eventually realized that I just could not adapt myself properly. On one occasion, while at home for school holidays, my parents informed me that they would not be sending me back to Shavel. I was overjoyed, but Raya who was visiting with me at the time, felt sad at the thought of losing a close friend. We promised to write to each other, and since Shavel was not so far away we hoped to see each other many times after that.

I continued my schooling at home with the help of my eldest sister and under the supervision of a private Russian teacher. Some days I would walk to his home which was nearby. He was the only Russian speaking teacher we could find and we were lucky to get him because Lithuania was an independant state and had very little Russian influence.

At the beginning of the following year, my brothers returned from Kovno. It was so wonderful to see them again and share some happy moments together. Grisha and Boris did not stay long, but it was long enough for them to convince my parents that I should return with them to Kovno to attend a Lithuanian High School. I was surprised when my parents agreed to this arrangement. I was quite ecstatic.

With great excitement I left Popelian with Grisha and Boris. We took the train to Kovno. A feeling of girlish pride and importance swept away my doubts and regrets about embarking into an almost unknown lifestyle, a new venture.

I was very smartly dressed in a blue coat with a light blue dress. Sitting between Grisha and Boris I looked curiously out of the window at the passing scenery. Boris sat reading the newspaper and Grisha struck up a conversation

with a man sitting opposite us in our compartment. I listened attentively to Grisha talking and I watched him carefully, my heart was filled with pride and love. After a while the gentle rocking rhythm of the train made it difficult for me to keep awake. I eventually nodded off into deep sleep. My hat slipped off my head and I moved closer to Grisha and ended up resting my head on his shoulder.

We arrived in Kovno in the late afternoon. The train pulled into the busy station. It was a complete surprise to see so many people bustling about. The wonderful feeling of adventure and anticipation gripped hold of me. I followed Boris out of the carriage with Grisha close by carrying pieces of my luggage. As Boris jumped off the train onto the station he turned around and firmly placed his hand on my wrist and whirled me on the platform.

We made our way out of the station and started towards the boarding house where we would be staying in. Boris and Grisha eagerly began pointing out important landmarks of the city. I hurried along carrying my hatbox, coat and handbag. Everything seemed so interesting. We arrived at the boarding house, Grisha led the way up the path to the front door. A woman opened the front door and both my brothers greeted the woman who seemed pleased to meet us.

An arrangement was made that I would sleep in the same room of the widow at night and, during the day I would use the room Boris and Grisha shared. I was introduced to the other tenant Monya, an eccentric young musician. I adjusted very quickly to my new life.

Grisha made all the necessary paperwork for my application at the high school. During the day I washed our clothes and carefully ironed them, industriously I tried to tidy the room that was almost in a constant state of chaos. Each day I met a new face, scores of young people. Some students would pass our boarding house and visit Boris and Grisha. I loved to hear Monya rehearsing on his violin. More than often I would sit in on his rehearsals.

My application at the high school was accepted and I started to study again. I enjoyed my new school and studied seriously. The arrangement of living in Kovno suited me. Boris' and Grisha's friends were very affectionate towards me and I felt very secured and happy.

We spent most of the evenings with a young crowd of students visiting us or



with a group from the newspaper. I would sit very quietly in the background and observe. I listened with interest, the conversations were almost spell-binding. Political opinions were tossed about and ideas about the building up of Lithuania were passionately shared. My respect and admiration for Boris and Grisha was never ending.

In this very colourful almost Bohemian lifestyle I began to grasp the deep understanding of humanity. Monya would sometimes invite us to a concert he was performing in. I felt very much part of the group. I was never treated as a child, this encouraged me to behave in a more adult manner.

I was very popular among my schoolmates. I would sit and recall the political events and opinions which I heard from my brothers. My friends were almost in awe of my knowledge. History became a passionate subject to me. It was a wonderful advantage and a valuable lesson to be so casually connected with the young intellectuals of Kovno.

During the first year in Kovno, an incident took place which helped me settle my questions of identity once and for all. We were celebrating Lithuania's National Day of Independence. My classmates and I were so excited as we prepared ourselves for the parade. On this occasion all the schools took part in marching to the house of parliament. We were all dressed in our school uniforms.

I felt so proud to be taking part in the festivities. As we left the school, the headmaster informed us that the Jewish children had to march separately as we were not true Lithuanians. I was so deeply hurt, but most of all I was totally confused. I had just begun to feel that I belonged when I was dealt this cruel blow.

Coming home that summer, I spoke to my father about my feelings, my rejection and dismay at not being considered as one of "Them". We would talk until the early hours of the morning. He told me stories from the Bible, about the miracles of God, the sacrifices of our forefathers, about the Jewish people and our Promised Land..... He made me understand that I am a Jew first, and I should be proud of that fact. These ideas were strongly embedded in my mind, and they lead to my first feelings and dream of one day reaching the Promised Land. During those summer days I felt fulfilled. I was growing up and with the help of my parents I was able to see things in a new light. I found the

The town was built on a hill, with the River Venter flowing at its base. What a lot of pleasure this river gave to the people of Popelian. Bathing in the

Jewish history incredibly heroic and admirable. He told me about our family name the " RU TENBERGS ".

Dating back to the 13th century in the city of Rothenburg in Germany, a Rabbi Meir Rutenberg occupied the seat of the Rabbinate. During this period of history, Germany was divided into countries and each was governed by a Prince. Within the royal governing circles, a lot of corruption existed.

The Prince would gamble heavily at Banquets playing stakes against his country's income. More than often the gambling debts could not be met as the people in the countries could not produce enough money. In the city of Rothenburg the people were becoming afraid of the debts and kept struggling to meet the demands of their careless Prince.

At last a decision was passed by the Rabbi to refuse to meet the outstanding debt. The governing Prince was outraged at the Rabbi's defiance and furiously demanded to see the Rabbi. When the palace messenger arrived to fetch the Rabbi, he had already fled in fear of the Prince's rage.

Rabbi Meir was caught in a neighbouring country and brought forward as a Ransom or else face the cruelty of a prison sentence. Rabbi Meir urged the people of Rothenburg to refuse paying so as to prevent further blackmail. So Rabbi Meir Rutenberg faced a terrible torturous prison sentence. He later died in prison.

His descendants ran away from Germany to Holland and from there moved to Latvia, Riga and Poland. Much later in the course of history they moved across to America. I felt deeply moved by the intensity of courage and suffering experienced by my father's ancestors.

On my arrival at home for the holidays I was surprised and pleased to find my aunt and uncle living with us. They had arrived from Russia earlier in the year. My father and uncle built a house adjoining ours. We shared one common wall, this was a cheaper method for building. The wall dividing the two houses became an internal communication system. If I wanted my cousins to come over and play, I would bang on the wall.

The town was built on a hill, with the River Venter~~x~~ flowing at its base. What a lot of pleasure this river gave to the people of Popelian. Bathing in the summer months and skating on its solid surface during the winter.

The best part of each day was spent swimming in the river. My cousins and I would chase each other down the hill towards the river and then race to be the first one in the water. Diving and jumping off the rocks into the river was great fun. If we were not swimming we were rowing on the river in a small paddle boat. The holidays were soon over and I returned to Kovno anxious to be with Boris and Grisha.

On my return to Kovno I was disappointed to learn that Grisha and Boris who had applied to study in Germany were accepted. They were going to study in Germany but would still be connected to the newspaper "ECHO". An arrangement was made that they would write articles for the newspaper from Germany. I moved into my brothers' room. I felt a great sense of loss, life in Kovno was wonderful with Grisha and Boris.

Weeks slipped into months and I soon adjusted to being with the widow in the house. I looked forward to seeing Grisha and Boris on their frequent trips to the Echo. I continued my education at the Lithuanian school and progressed.

During Grisha's studies in Berlin, he uncovered some very interesting information from the Berlin Archives. This information was about a very well known historian Simonas ~~Daukantas~~ **Daukantas** who documented the original Independence of early Lithuania. With great enthusiasm Grisha compiled a book. Simonas ~~Daukantas~~ **Daukantas** was buried in Popelian. His book was enormously successful. It was given a lot of publicity in Lithuania. A memorial service was held in Popelian in his honour, and the tombstone was unveiled.

Our small town came alive with all the activity. Grisha came home for the occasion and suddenly, almost overnight my family became well known. The ministers from the cabinet who came from Kovno for the unveiling, came to our house for tea. In a great state of excitement my mother was baking, cleaning and polishing our home for the grand occasion. She baked cakes and an assortment of pastries. I was very happy and the excitement made me feel as if it was a festive occasion.

On the day of the unveiling I was dressed in my best clothes. My mother wore my favourite red velvet skirt. All the best linen was displayed on the tables.

The neighbours very kindly lent us their best cups and teapot. My father closed the shop and wore his best suit. Everyone was smiling, the feeling of pride and happiness in the hearts of my parents was very special.

Three years later during our summer holidays I was in Popelian with my parents when Boris arrived home with a girl he knew from Kovno, Sonya a young nurse. She was his steady girlfriend. To our delight he announced his wedding plans. I was very happy, and spontaneously the family began the wedding preparations. My parents accepted Sonya with warmth. Although I knew that Grisha had in the past been joking and teasing Boris about getting serious over Sonya as she came from a poor family. So Boris had at last taken the plunge regardlessly. Sonya was very pretty and a very hard working young woman.

The wedding took place in Popelian. It was a very entertaining and exciting occasion. Friends and relatives joined in the dancing and singing. The bride looked beautiful in her mother's wedding dress. I was very impressed with my new sister-in-law. Boris looked very handsome in his wedding suit. Looking at the couple in-love, I wished that I could one day fall in-love with a handsome ^{like Boris} man. A group of young Jewish men formed a circle and began dancing the Chashidick. The women formed their own circle and soon we were dancing vigorously round and round. Our two families were united in celebration.

Boris and his wife settled in Kovno in a small flat. I returned to the widow's house and back to school. I saw Boris and Sonya frequently. They started a family almost immediately and were overjoyed at the birth of their little girl. In the meantime I became very close to Grisha who seemed to care more intensely about my wellbeing. He came often to Kovno and seemed to spend more time with me than with Boris.

In 1929 Grisha graduated from the University with a doctorate in Law. A big celebration party was planned in Berlin. I was ecstatic when Grisha invited me to the party, Boris and Sonya were also invited. We travelled together by train. My life suddenly blossomed as we crossed the border into Germany. I was absolutely impressed by the German countryside. As the train snaked its way up the mountains and down through the valley, I was almost mesmerised by the beauty and wonder of this new country.

I was locked in fascination when we arrived in Berlin. People hurried past coming and going. Women beautifully dressed in fashionable clothes flitted pass. I just felt totally impressed by the feeling of liberation and cleanli-

ness of the city.

Grisha's party was a big success. A lot of people and his friends came and we were tightly packed in his small room. Inside the smoke filled room I looked around at the people and suddenly longed to be older. Grisha introduced me proudly to most of his friends and colleagues, and affectionately referred to me as his little sister. During that party I made up my mind that as soon as my high school education was complete I would return to Germany to study.

I stayed in Berlin for two months. Grisha was working as a legal advisor for a Pharmaceutical company and he organised a job for me in one of the cosmetic laboratories. I was given a very junior position, helping to fill the bottles with perfumes and the jars with creams. My interest in the laboratories increased daily.

I found myself becoming more and more involved with the work. I would watch the senior laboratory technicians mixing the cosmetics from basic recipe. Sometimes I would help weigh the ingredients and soon I grasped the importance of accurate measurements.

This was my first holiday job. I enjoyed working even though some of the work was boring, it gave me great confidence. Once every three weeks it would be my turn to wash the toilets. Communication was quite easy because one of my subjects at school was German so I managed to make myself understood. During this time I decided I would study Pharmacy once I completed my high school. The money I earned on vacation I paid for my extra lessons in German. I wanted to study at the Institute of Pharmacy and I would be required to write an entrance examination.

I returned to Kovno after two months and started my schooling again. I studied hard and with vigour. It pleased me that I had found my future in Pharmacy. My school subjects were a lot of work. I had to absorb the Lithuanian history in great detail plus my extra German history lessons.

Some nights I worked late, my teachers were very pleased with my marks. I came first in most of my subjects. Physics was one of my favourite subjects, I enjoyed spending hours preparing for the examination. On one occasion my exam paper was given outstanding attention. I had received the highest percentage for my paper. I was overjoyed when our Physics master congratulated me and said that I would be a future Professor and then shook my hand. I blushed

happily and could scarcely conceal my pride. All the long hours of study were forgotten when my results were rewarding. I completed my school at the age of seventeen.

During my final year Grisha had married a girl from Riga in Latvia. She was a Lawyer and from a good family. Grisha and his wife Mima lived near to my boarding house. I spent a lot of time with them and I was very fond of Mima. She was a perfect match for Grisha. She shared Grisha's passion for History.

I returned to Popelian to my parents. They were very anxious about my future plans. The idea of a young girl alone in Berlin did not appeal to them. In a sense they were old fashioned but I appreciated that, and tried not to get upset. I was adamant about my future studies in Germany. I decided to pursue my studies.

Mima's family invited me to Riga in Latvia for a visit. I accepted the invitation and I realised by the enthusiastic attitude of my parents that they hope I would find another interest in Riga. I had already applied for my entrance examination in Berlin, and in a matter of months I would be leaving for Germany.

I travelled by train to Riga, and was warmly welcomed by Mima's parents. They were wealthy socialites of Riga. I met the family and their son Fima, a few years older than me. Fima was at home on vacation from Germany. I spent a lot of time with Fima who proved to be an excellent guide. I was taken to the local museums and places of interest.

I felt a bit out of depth in my glamorous surroundings. One evening I was offered a drink before dinner and boldly I accepted. I took a small sip from the glass and burst into a gasp. I felt all the eyes on me, and myself blushing. Mima's mother showed her concern and graciously asked me what was wrong. To everyone's amusement I exclaimed, "The liquid in the glass is bitter."

My clothing proved to be inadequate. Mima's mother was very generous and instructed her dressmaker to make few dresses for me. I felt wonderful, dressed in such pretty clothes. Mima's mother was fascinating, she was sophisticated, elegant and gracious. I felt very happy surrounded by constant fussing and revelled in the luxury.

Mima's mother was disappointed when I began preparing to return to Popelian. I was honoured to learn that she wanted me to stay indefinitely in Riga. I explained that it was necessary to go to Germany. With great regret they let me return to Popelian.

My parents were pleased to see me and seemed to suppress their anxiety about my need to go to Germany. I felt a bit frustrated. My parents were reluctant to discuss any of my immediate plans. A few days passed before I began in earnest to discuss my future. Popelian was a small town far removed from city life, Berlin seemed to most of our family friends a fantasy beyond a working man's life. At last I was ready to leave. I had packed my clothing and reserved my seat in the train. A feeling of excitement filled me. My dream had finally materialised.

I felt guilty about leaving my parents and partly understood their disappointment. I was after all their youngest child and during my schooling my parents had expressed their hope that I would settle into a job near to Popelian. My mother hugged me at the railway station and I found myself fighting back my tears. My father kept making us laugh and his smile seemed to hide his sorrow.

I waved goodbye from the moving train until they were almost out of sight. I sat in my compartment and watched the moving scenery and listened to the rhythmical sounds of the train. I sat for sometime staring unseeing out of the window and finally dozed off to sleep.

B E R L I N

I & 2

I opened my eyes and began to stretch myself when I realized the train had stopped. I jumped up and opened the window to look out. To my delight we had arrived in Berlin. I must have slept through the night, vaguely I remember being woken up in the early hours of the morning by the conductor to check my ticket when we crossed the border. I pulled my hat on, peeped into the little mirror hanging above the bunk, I pinched my cheeks to make sure I was not dreaming. With an air of jubilation I climbed off the train and walked towards the station exit.

I remembered my previous journey with Boris and his wife. I passed the familiar Kiosk and made my way up towards the street level. I found a taxi and he took me to the suburb of Charlottenburg. I had written to the widow that Grisha had lived with during his stay in Germany. She had been pleased to hear from me and had written to say I could have Grisha's old room.

I was well received and showed to my room. Almost immediately I felt at home. I sat on the bed and looked around the little room, it was almost as if I was with Grisha. The widow had prepared my room. Very methodically, she opened the empty wardrobe and indicated where I could put my clothes and checked the shoe cupboard. She was a very kind woman and I liked her. I was invited for tea after I had unpacked and had a wash. After tea I went back to my room and had a short rest.

I wrote a brief letter to my parents reassuring them of my safety and details of my journey. Later I completed my application form for the Institute of Pharmacy. I took out my notes and began to prepare myself as I would be required to write an entrance examination. My first supper in Berlin was the remains of my provision which my mother gave me when I left Popelian. I was quite hungry and too tired to explore, so I went to bed early.

The next morning I was up early, I dressed with care selecting a smart dress and took great pains to brush my hair until it shone. When I was satisfied with my appearance I set off for the Institute to hand in my application. I arrived at the Institute and made my way towards the office where I handed in my application. After enquiring about when I would know if I could write the entrance examination. I was a bit disappointed when I was told that I would be notified within a couple of days.

On my way out of the Institute I looked around with interest at the students coming and going. Very pleased with myself that I had made the first move towards organising my education I made my way home. I walked slowly observing the city surroundings and looked for familiar sights that reminded me of Grisha. I found the city very clean.

Ten days later I received a letter from the Institute that there were no vacancies. I was very disappointed and went back to the Institute and explained my situation.

I was a foreigner from Lithuania with very little means and I had good academic recommendations, almost with insistence I spoke. Unfortunately I was not going to start my studies, the Institute was full.

I returned home and began to make alternative arrangements. I went to the Pharmakon where I had worked during my three months holiday. I spoke to the Manager and he was pleased to see me. I was given a position to start work. I accepted my fate and was relieved. I decided to reapply at the Institute in the spring when the next intake would be. In the mean time I would work and save some money.

My first day at work passed very quickly. I felt almost at home among my colleagues. At tea time most of the girls working in my section crowded around me talking and laughing, it felt good to be so warmly received. Once again I worked side by side with Lena and Lotta. My day began at 7.00 O'clock. I would get up, tidy my room, make a cup of tea and walk to the underground station.

The train would take me to the outskirts of Berlin where the Pharmakon was. I would start work at 8.00 O'clock. I worked in each section of the factory. Sometimes my responsibility would be to mix powders for cosmetics, fill perfumes in bottles or prepare jars of cream, organise the packaging for distribution. As I was going to study Pharmacy, I was sometimes sent to the Medical section to help with the preparation of medical herbs. The herbs were imported from Holland. Once the herbs had passed through the crushing process it was one of my tasks to weigh proportions for packaging.

Once every month each employee would receive a parcel of samples which consisted of washing powder soap, perfume, cream and remnants from the laboratory. I found the German people very organised. The factory was run

efficiently. Our working conditions were very good and the factory was hygienic. I was very grateful that I was well liked and above all well accepted. Co-operation was an exercise among the employees. At christmas time we were all treated with generosity, a party was given and it was an occasion to be remembered.

Each evening on the way home I would stop at the delicatessen to buy food for supper. I would seldom warm my food up in the widow's kitchen, but I was most of the times content to eat cold food. I seldom had supper with the widow, mostly I would stay for a cup of tea. We were very much acquainted but our friendship was a bit reserved and that suited me.

Grisha's friend who was an engineering student from Finland would sometimes pay me a visit or take me out. He was working at Krupp factory. I felt very comfortable with Anatol. We had a lot in common and enjoyed talking about novels we had read and subjects that covered politics and history.

Anatol used to invite me out to show me Berlin. I was not particularly adventurous on my own, my life was monotonous, going to and from work. Venturing around Sharlotenburg to shop and to ~~ice~~-skate during the winter.

The winter passed very quickly, I received a few food parcels from my mother. I wrote to my family weekly and looked forward to their letters. I bought my mother a good mohair jersey for the winter. It was my first present to her. I tried to save as much of my salary as possible. When I received a food parcel from Popelian I would share the smoked turkey with the widow. Eating the turkey or the cookies and other delicious food from home left me feeling a little homesick. A strong force of magnetism held me in Germany. The city life was tremendous it made Popelian seem dull.

At last the cold winter thawed into spring. I was impatient to put my application at the Institute of Pharmacy. I had gradually realized that my Jewish birthright was a stumbling block. I had been told by the students that the Dean at the Institute of Pharmacy had a tendency towards anti-Semitism. This was a disturbing factor that could destroy my future, hopes and dreams. After giving some considerable thought I decided that my application was not enough. I made an appointment to see the Dean personally. After a lot of attempts I eventually got an appointment with the Dean at his home.

I dressed with care for the meeting. I brushed my fair hair until it shone. I wore my favourite dress, a very slim fitting yellow dress with detailed black motifs on the fabric. My final impression in the mirror added to my confidence. I arrived at the given address and stood in amazement appreciating the huge beautiful villa. I felt very nervous, my whole future depended on this interview.

The front door stood open and as I approached I heard the sounds of a violin. I knocked timidly on the door but the sounds were lost in loud violin music. So I went further into the hallway and found myself walking softly across the highly polished marble floor towards the source of music. I found a young handsome man a few years older than me playing on the violin. We both startled each other and then smiled. The young man had a **very** friendly boyish face and after introducing myself I discovered he was the son of the Dean. I felt a little relaxed as we made pleasant conversation. He told me that his father was expecting me but would arrive later.

My interview with the Dean went along very sympathetic lines. After I had explained my predicament, the Dean sat contemplating my situation. I was young, ambitious and much eager to further my studies. I was employed by Pharmakon in Berlin and by staying in Berlin I could support myself. All these factors must have painted a very desperate picture. The Dean decided to reconsider my application. He gave me no guarantee that I would definitely be accepted.

I left his home with a great feeling of hope. The days that followed were filled with anticipation and eventually with great happiness. I was at last accepted into the Institute of Pharmacy.

I had two friends at the factory namely, Lena and Lotta, who were both my colleagues. They were delighted with my success at managing to enrol with the Institute. I kept my job competently. Lena and Lotta were Germans and our friendship remained unprejudiced even though the radio broadcasted programmes of outrageous propaganda about the Jewish people. Despite the bizzare anti-Jewish articles published in the newspaper the atmosphere in Berlin was hopeful. We believed the anti-Jewish attitude would pass so we continued to live our lives as peacefully as possible.

My eldest brother left for Geneva in Switzerland at the beginning of Autumn. He was studying to be an international lawyer. My other brother who was a

journalist left for Kovno the capital of Lithuania. He had met a lovely girl and got married. I was still staying with the widow and enjoying my studies.

One day after my lectures as I was coming out of the building, to my surprise I found the son of the Dean waiting for me. He congratulated me on my acceptance at the Institute and walked me home. I felt very elated and complimented him for the attention that he gave me. His name was Fritz and I became attracted to him.

One evening a week later Fritz arrived unexpectedly to take me skating. My heart was beating wildly with joy, I just glowed with happiness. That evening turned out to be so special. We spent a long time skating in each other's arms, teasing and laughing. I remember the music that was playing and the words of the song, they were romantic. He stopped me in the middle of the ice-rink and kissed me. In a blurr of the moment I was wonderfully confused. Should I respond or hold back? I felt a little shy as I was really very inexperienced. We began to see a lot of each other and I looked forward to our meetings.

Fritz was studying music and he began to prepare for a competition. One day his father met me at the Institute during a break and invited me to come to his home to listen to Fritz's rehearsals. I was ecstatic. Again I dressed up beautifully and went to his home.

When I arrived Fritz's father and grandmother welcomed me. They both extended warm gratitude for my presence because I would be an inspiration to Fritz. His grandmother showed me to the library. We all set in the library. Sitting in the large impressively furnished library at the Dean's house, I felt a great sense of beauty listening to Fritz playing.

I was not invited to attend the actual competition on account of the anti-Jewish atmosphere. Well then, I did not mind. His grandmother invited me to lunch the following Sunday. It was almost supper time when Fritz took me home. Fritz and I ate a small meal I prepared in my room and we felt very close as we talked about our ideas. Soon I was going to Fritz's home every Sunday for lunch. After lunch Fritz and I would stroll arm in arm around the garden talking about our dreams. When his father woke up from his nap I would play a game of chess with him and Fritz would provide the background music on the violin.

My nineteenth birthday was approaching and I made plans to return home for the holidays. I was excited about going home. I boarded the special train that was going to the Baltic States, Lithuania, Latvia Estonia and Finland. Most of the passengers were students that were going home for the Easter holidays, as we all were foreign students we became friendly with each other and discussed our lives, studies and atmosphere in Berlin.

Arriving at the little station in Popelian I found both my parents waiting. It was an exciting feeling to see them expecting me. My mother had gone to great pains to prepare for my homecoming. She had baked and prepared my favourite food. I was full of praise when I described my life in Berlin. My parents sat silently listening to my tales of glory. I described the city, the Institute and told them about Fritz. I found their attitude a bit disappointing, both my parents seemed to avoid asking any details about Fritz and his family. I seemed to sense their disapproval.

My brothers and their wives made a special journey to Popelian to pay me a visit. It was wonderful to see them again. I was surprised at the anxiety my family expressed when I announced that I intended to continue my studies in Germany. Suddenly everyone seemed terribly concerned about my safety and we spoke about the rising anti-Semitism. Yet at this stage I felt no apprehension, I was determined to accomplish what I started out to study.

I had struggled to get to Germany. My parents had been very against my choice, when I had gone to Germany I left fully aware of their disapproval. We sat over the dinner table talking about Germany. I began to feel my frustration rising. My mother was getting very emotional and almost insistent. She pushed her plate aside and telling me that if I want to study then I must study in Popelian. My mother insisted saying to me, "If you want to study then study the piano." I felt a wave of exasperation. In my heart I felt anguish, my parents never protested when Grisha and Boris studied in Germany.

The political implications in Germany had little effect on me. I was living in the country and I gathered little information from the newspaper. Now here in little Popelian my family knew more than me and I lived there. I felt the news media had exaggerated the conditions. The next day Mima, Grisha's wife, took me aside and pleaded with me to reconsider, yet my will to return to Germany remained.

The time at home passed quickly and soon we were preparing to return to our different destinations. My parents were very distressed and I was almost relieved to return to Germany.

I returned to my room in Berlin. I found no messages from Fritz and I felt a bit empty. I began to take more interest in the newspaper and very slowly I realized my family in Popelian were almost right. Yet a small flicker of optimism remained.

I returned to my work in the factory and I received a dreadful blow. On arrival at the factory I walked towards my work station and found Lotta and Lena sitting. I greeted them and no one replied. So I moved around the lab table to sit on my chair and found Lotta sitting in my place. I was very surprised, Lena and Lotta were friends of mine. I put my bag down and half joking asked Lotta about my place. She turned defiantly in the chair and harshly told me that I would find my place in the cemetery. I was stunned into silence. The manager walked into the room and I picked my bag up and moved away to stand against the wall. My pride made me not to accept this insult, I would not sit in Lotta's chair. The manager came to enquire why I was not working, so I explained that Lotta occupied my place. Lotta was told to move and I sat down to work. From that day on we seldom spoke to each other. I was deeply hurt.

The anti-Jew feeling was growing and soon I began to feel rejected, the invitations to Fritz's home decreased. I saw less and less of him. I felt very depressed and the situation was beyond my control.

At the end of the semester it was customary for all the students to congregate in the favourite coffee house and celebrate the passing of our exams. In this celebration the Jewish students were excluded. I felt strongly depressed as I made my way home.

As I approached the house that I was lodging in, I saw Fritz standing with a group of other young men. As I got nearer I realized their intentions. They had tied a rope across the road and were waiting for me. I stopped in front of the rope and looked at Fritz, he looked away and I felt betrayed. I was commanded by one of the young men to jump over the rope. My pride made me turn and run away. I heard their laughter echo in my ears. I wondered around our suburb sobbing, my heart was broken. Eventually I went home and

that night came to the decision that I would try to return to Lithuania. I made up my mind to pick up the shattered pieces and start again.

Life in Berlin was becoming unpleasant, the Hitler propaganda was gaining momentum. Among the Jewish community the inner fear was almost static. I still held my job at the factory but the conditions were very depressing.

A few months later Hitler had passed a Law that all Jewish Businesses had to be nationalized. A wave of distress hit the Jewish people. Yet the German citizens were still pleasant but reserved towards us. I still stayed with the widow but our relationship was very strained. I expected her to ask me to go but she withdrew from me and spoke to me only when necessary. I felt dreadful how could these German people be so polite and yet so cruel at the same time.

During this period life felt strained, I was feeling very trapped and helpless. Grisha arrived unexpectedly in Berlin, I was relieved to see him. My hopes were renewed, we spoke about the situation and I still believed this wild anger would calm down. Grisha spoke to his friend Mr Fein-stein, one of the Jewish owners and directors of the factory. They agreed that if the situation got out of hand, I was to flee with him (the director) and his family. Even though the factory was nationalized the Jewish owners were still in control until the law had been official. This seemed to make me feel a little secure.

The letters I had written home remained unanswered. I felt a sense of helplessness, the tables had turned, I was loosing ground. I sat often contemplating my situation, I desperately wanted to fulfil my ambitions. Success in Germany meant a lot to me. The situation was getting out of control. My landlady had changed towards me, I felt under constant pressure. In my heart I longed to be reunited with my family. My studies had come to an abrupt halt because of the anti-Jewish attitude. The old carefree feeling I had, had long past. My sleepless nights were filled with constant worry. All that I could think about was getting away from the horrible life in Berlin.

I decided to go to the Lithuanian consulate to organise my return home. The Consulate agreed to attend to the matter and I received no indication that Lithuania had joined the anti-Semitic uprising. At the end of the month I eagerly waited for my salary and was shocked to discover that I and all the other Jewish employees had been struck off the payroll.

One day I was working at my bench when two men in uniform came up to me and told me to come with them as I was going to be put in detention. My mouth went dry and I stared into their faces hardly able to comprehend. I picked up my handbag and was led out of the room. A terrible silence hung over the laboratory. I felt all my colleagues staring at me. I was humiliated and almost terrified. I was told that they would take me to my room to fetch my things. All the knowledge they had about me and my whereabouts was frightening.

We arrived at the widow's house in a big black car, I hurried up the stairs to my room. I saw the widow standing in the entrance and she stared blankly at me and looked away from my pleading eyes as if she never knew me. Anxious to obey I threw my belongings together and bit my bottom lip to fight back the rising dam of tears. I felt desperate and wretched.

We arrived at the detention house and I felt an atmosphere of fear. Silence and staring eyes greeted me. I was escorted to my bed in a room with three other young girls. Our daily movements were carefully monitored. To my surprise, the next morning I was escorted back to the factory to work again. I spoke to no one, everybody seemed to avoid eye contact with me. Jews were forbidden to walk on the street pavements, yet a lot of Germans remained friendly and pleasant.

I worried constantly about my family. I was afraid that they will not be able to trace me and would be distressed about my safety. I lost my appetite and seemed to sink into a state of deep depression. Life had become a nightmare, I was in constant fear, tomorrow seemed to hold no clues to our future. Each morning I woke up I would be afraid of the day, I did not know what to anticipate.

One day I received a letter from the Lithuanian Embassy. The letter arrived at the factory, with shaking hands I opened the letter. My mind raced as I read the contents. It instructed me to report to the Swedish Embassy. I was very puzzled, I knew nobody at the Swedish Embassy. I showed the letter to our escort who took me to the Embassy. I was totally confused when I arrived and was told that my travel documents had been prepared and my immediate destination was Stockholm.

In a daze I returned to our place of detention. Having no-one to speak to as conversation was strictly forbidden between inmates, I decided to wait until

that night when the lights were out and we could whisper to each other.

That night I whispered my plight to a girl I had befriended. I discovered that one other girl in detention was also going to Sweden. I was afraid, what would Sweden want from me. I desperately wanted to go to Lithuania. I wept and sobbed myself to sleep. Time was placing a terrible distance between me and my beloved family. I constantly thought about my brothers, and I would close my eyes tightly to squeeze back the tears. The past weeks had been a wave of constant fear and a terrible hunger burning in stomach for my home.

The sun rose and I woke for the last time in my narrow bed in detention. I got up and the events of my destination flooded into my mind. As I bent to put my shoes on the tears fell heavily from my face. I felt trapped like an animal. I could hardly eat the miserable colourless breakfast. Nervously I watched my detained companions. We were summonsed in a group yet I was called aside with a young girl. The escort marched the group away. I watched my companions through my tears. As a last resort I begged my escort to stay. I was given a harsh reply that I should be grateful to leave Berlin.

We left the detention barracks in a bus bound for the railway station. I stared at the passing city scenery from my window seat. A deep regret flooded through my mind; If only my studies had been fulfilled; If only Berlin and Germany had not lifted its ugly anti-Semitic head and monstrous revenge on innocent religious people.

We arrived at the railway station and were taken to the departure platform to wait for our train. It was a tense moment standing with a group of students on an empty platform. The rumble **along** the long narrow tunnel reassured us. The train slowly slid alongside our platform. At last the moment of FREEDOM had come.

In excitement we began to scramble onto the train. I remember hurrying to find a seat in a compartment. As the whistle signalled the train to depart I sighed deeply and looked out at the moving station. It was as if a page was turning in my life and I was starting a new chapter.

STOCKHOLM

As the train **rumbled** along through the countryside, I listened to the clicking of the wheels on the track. **The** rythmical sound seemed to echo in my mind. I was being drawn further away from my family. Helplessly I tried to reason with myself, I was going to an unknown destination. I had left no **contacting** address I felt lost, unhappy and reuniting with my family seemed to be moving further away.

I was jolted back into reality by the loud chatter of my companions in the compartment. We were all foreigners but from Berlin. I felt the atmosphere amongst us almost jubilant. After we introduced ourselves we sat joking, laughing and reliving our dreadful detention experiences and exchanging political ideas. But conversation soon faded and some drifted off to sleep others stared unseeing ahead and I closed my eyes tightly and tried to remember my brothers' faces. I longed for their comforting presence, I wanted the warmth of my mother's embrace, the reassuring twinkle in my father's eye. I sighed deeply and my thoughts drifted back to our very colourful political discussions we had.

Grisha and Boris were very democratic but both followed different party leaders. Boris favoured and admired Trotsky and Grisha passionately followed **Kerensky**. They would argue into the early hours of the morning. As I had a great affection for Boris I would playfully side against Grisha. Then the battle would rage with great enthusiasm. I smiled to myself when I thought about them. I would have a lot to tell them, this almost reassured me. I wondered about Sweden, I thought about how I would explain my arrival in Sweden to them.

We arrived at the Swedish border and the train came to an abrupt halt. All of us jumped up and curiously craned our necks out ^{of} the window to see what was going to happen next. A man was travelling with us and he was our Swedish escort. The officials walked up the train corridor and we quickly sat back in our seats and watched in silence. Our tickets were collected and we were counted. The escort spoke to the officials in Swedish, most of us sat bewildered a strange language we could not relate to.

We **continued** our journey and arrived in Stockholm. A feeling of excitement captured us. We pushed each other to get a better view of the approaching city from the window. At the station we were called into a group, we kept close to each other. The escort put us in a bus and told us that we were being taken to the hospital.

At the hospital we were all examined by a doctor. I was almost shocked when

the doctor decided to admit me into the convalescence ward in the hospital. I panicked as there seemed too little wrong with me, I was very thin, but so were my companions. I felt bad sometimes but I tossed that aside.

I was given medication and put to bed. For the first few days I slept fitfully and regained my strength. We were very well cared for. I was impatient to be up and about but was often told to go back to bed when I wondered up the passage. Due to lack of communication and foreign environment I was anxious to join the group.

During my convalescence I made friends with an elderly woman, her name was Emma. I heard a voice calling from the next room when I went to find out I met Emma. She was a Jewish woman living in Stockholm and very ill. Daily I would spend a little time reading to her in German. Incidentally the book I read was about a girl leaving Germany and the painful feelings about leaving her beloved country. I spoke to Emma about my frantic feelings, how desperately I wanted to contact my family. She tried to console me. As she was living with her family she pressed upon me that one is always alone. Her family were very caring and loving but now she was very ill and alone in her illness. So together we tried to console each other.

Ten days later I was discharged from the hospital and sent to live with a Swedish family. At first the warm family environment made me feel lonely and homesick. The family were German speaking and showed a lot of kindness towards me. Even though I was desperately depressed and lost, I appreciated their hospitality. I was taken on outings, I visited castles and museums. On one occasion they took me to visit the King's palace in Sweden. In great anticipation I went to the palace.

I felt my old spirit returning, Sweden was a democratic country and liberated. I began to think about the democratic feelings I shared with my brothers in Lithuania. I thought about the Ukraine and the celebration that took place in October.

I was only six years old. It was my first experience of group jubilation. People were standing gathered together singing the "Marseillaise" anthem. It was a very impressionable occasion. The feeling of freedom and equality was great. I too stood up straight and proud, and sang a few words with my whole heart. Eagerly I looked at the jewels and crowns on display. I thought about meeting the King. In my mind I felt proud and would be able to hold a

conversation on common ground with him. The more I thought about it the more the idea appealed to me. Subconsciously I began to look to see if maybe we would see the King. My imagination had run away with me and very soon we had completed the tour and were preparing to leave when I realized my disappointment.

During my stay I met one of the family relatives. A man about the age of thirty years. He was visiting and came from Norway. A good looking man with a lot of worldly experience. On meeting me he seemed to find me very interesting and spent a lot of time with me. I felt a mixture of feminine pride and confidence.

Arrangements were being made for me to leave Sweden with a group of refugee youths to go to Palestine. The general attitude amongst the Jewish refugees was to try to get to Palestine. Thousands of refugees were leaving Europe hoping to be reunited with their families in Palestine. Europe was very unstable and the Nazi occupation was growing stronger. When I was told that I was on the passenger list to leave for Palestine I was tremendously relieved.

On hearing about my arrangements this man became quite concerned. He tried to persuade me to stay. We went for a walk and he earnestly pleaded with me. I was only nineteen years old and when I was a bit older he would be very serious about proposing marriage. I listened to his plans, he would invite me to Norway to meet his family and we could start to build our relationship. I felt no yearning to share any future time with him. I replied at the end of our conversation that my answer to his proposal was Palestine.

I was sad to leave the Swedish family but I had my own life to live. We had a farewell dinner and I received a little gift to take with me as a memento of Sweden. At the harbour we bade farewell and I promised to write. I picked up my battered suitcase and coat and walked towards the custom office, I looked back to wave and I saw the man looking very disappointed. I smiled and felt glad about my decision.

The ship sailed out of Stockholm harbour and the decks were crammed with foreign students waving frantically to the people on the harbour. All of us were stranded yet leaving Europe released a lot of pressure and the atmosphere was happy and exciting. Life suddenly felt wonderful. Our hearts were filled with hope.

The days that passed on the ship were almost as if we tried to recapture the lost carefree days of our youth. We danced the night away staying on deck to watch the sun rise. The delirious feeling of security and happiness was most infectious. At last my old spirit for life had reawakened.

At Triest we changed ships. We boarded a ship bound for Haifa harbour. The ship was overcrowded with passengers fleeing Europe. There was a mixture of students, families and relatives going to Palestine to be reunited with their families. I kept within range of my group from Stockholm.

I met a Russian man on the ship, his situation seemed so desperate. He claimed to have been a very successful businessman with a wonderful family. His children were in Siberia serving a hard labour sentence. He was blinded while in prison and then released. I felt deeply sad when he told me his story. I thought about my family, my feeling of longing burned in my heart. I fought back my tears. I hoped and prayed for a miracle. I hoped to arrive in Palestine and find my parents and family waiting.

Palestine would be the key to happiness. The nightmare and our dreadful memories would be buried and forgotten. I felt tremendous encouragement when I thought of my "FREEDOM".

P A L E S T I N E

THE PROMISED LAND

1939 - 1948

Our ship moored slowly into the harbour of Haifa. Most of the passengers stood on the deck staring at the approaching land. It was almost midday when we arrived and the day was clear without a cloud in sight. Once the ship had docked and we were preparing to disembark, the feeling of unease was with me again. I felt reluctant to leave the ship because in the past few weeks on board we had been carefree, happy and had recaptured such youthful feelings. I carried my suitcase down the gang plank and looked nervously about me. Moving in an almost silent crowd we made our way to the customs office. We stood in a queue for what seemed a life time in the scorching sun plagued by a multitude of flies. The harbour was filthy, unattended and chaotic with people crowding around the shabby custom control entrance.

The attitude of the British officials was far from being friendly, once again as a Jew, we represented a political threat. The Arabs were not eager to accept the alarming amount of Jewish refugees.

Once through the customs control we were called by our names into a group. With our luggage we were taken by bus to a settlement near Haifa. I learnt that we were being taken to an agricultural school for girls in Nahalal.

SETTLEMENT

When we arrived at Nahalal the ^A was built in a circular shape and gardens with fruit and flowers were to be found at every house. The house-keeper was waiting to welcome us. The feeling of discipline had dampened my spirits. I had believed in my heart that once I had set foot on Palestine Soil all my problems would vanish.

Life in the next few months proved to be very hard. We were put into rooms where three (3) girls would sleep together. We had to rise early every day and help in the running of the plantation. Each person was assigned to a duty and every three months we would rotate. Sometimes it was kitchen work, feeding the chickens and cleaning the foul-run, or picking fruit. My feeling of freedom was lost. I seldom had time to think, I threw myself onto my bed each night and fell into an exhausted sleep.

I had great difficulty adapting to the strange almost different way of life. We were young people thrown together because of circumstances. Most of us could hardly communicate with each other as we all came from different parts of the world.

The common language spoken on campus was Hebrew which I did not know. I was assigned to work in the flower section but as I did not understand the language I went to the citrus section. I was hopelessly confused and unable to be of any use. I was sent back to the flower section as the work in the citrus section seemed to be advanced for me.

Since my arrival in Palestine I had given up the hope of ever locating my family but to my surprise I found a distant paternal relative living in Haifa. His name was Pinchas Rutenberg. He was a Russian revolutionary and a pioneer of Israel industry. Pinchas Rutenberg established a company called Courtesy Israel Electric Corporation Haifa. I made contact with him and it meant a lot to me.

Pinchas lived with his mother and every free Friday I visited them and, returned back on Saturday evenings. ^{TO NAHALAL} In their house there was a hanging family photograph of Pinchas' father. That man looked exactly as my father. I liked to watch the photo. They made me very welcome in their home. After each visit I was given a parcel of cakes, sweets and nuts. I would save the few sweets and nuts for myself and share the cake with my roommates.

4 & 5 & 6

Working daily in the Agricultural school seemed a tiresome task. I was unenthusiastic growing beautiful flowers and plants, and this seemed pointless to me. I longed to pick up my studies to be back mixing chemicals. Very slowly I adapted and my interest was aroused when I was rewarded with results of my own hard laborious work. Having spent a lot of time planting seeds and preparing trays of soil and transplanting seedlings to beds, I suddenly awakened to the incredible growth and beauty of nature. My love for my plants blossomed and I began to find fulfillment in watching the creation of nature.

On one occasion a customer came to place an order. Unaccustomed to the language I tried to appear efficient. In Hebrew flowers and tins are words very relative in sound. Dutifully I handed the order to our supervisor who read my note and stared with a puzzled look at me. In my confusion I had placed an order for a hundred tins instead of hundred flowers.

From the neighbouring village Kfar Hachores came a request for fir tree seedlings. I was assigned to the preparation of a hundred shrubs.

I spent a lot of time planting, watering and caring for the little trees. After a few months they were taken to the proposed plantation to be planted. I had felt very proud and happy when my supervisor remarked on the straight erect little trees. Each seedling had been carefully bedded to ensure a good growth. I felt a little sad when my trees were taken and I had to plant the next batch.

After three months in the Agricultural school I was moved to the fowl-run. This was most upsetting as I had settled and adapted to my daily routine. I felt indignant and indifferent to feed the fowls and collecting eggs. After three weeks I was moved to the stable with the cows. Washing cattle was not my idea of work. I was hopeless. Firstly the size of the animal was intimidating. When I gingerly approached the cow to wash the body she would flick her tail into my face and startle me. While washing the cow, I was so frightened the animal sensed my fear and responded aggressively. The bucket of water I was holding was knocked over me and I screamed. My screaming upset the other workers and I was a constant aggravation to everyone.

After one week I was gratefully dismissed. To my relief and delight I was assigned back to the flower section. I felt my enthusiasm return and channeled my energy into my work.

About this time we heard that Chaim Weitzman, his wife and lady Dudley(the niece of Lord Balfour) were about to pay a visit to Nahalal. I was given a section of ground and told to start preparing a display for our honourary guest. With careful thought I began to plant seedlings. The flowers I had chosen to grow were very colourful with short stems. I decided to design a colour combination and spent a lot of time planning. I wanted to achieve an end product that would resemble a live carpet of colourful flowers.

When the honourable guests arrived we were all in a great state of excitement as our hard work was on display. I received a lot of recognition for my beautiful flower bed.

A few weeks later a man was sent from the Weitzmann Institute to start an experiment to grow Beetroot which could be made into sugar. I was chosen to be his assistant. The experiment was unsuccessful. But I managed to find out from this man that a professor from my Pharmacy Institute in Germany was working at the Weitzmann Institute. I was overjoyed to find one single person who identified my past.

I was eager to arrange to see the professor (I eagerly arranged to see the professor). I found out his address and wrote a letter to him. The Weitzmann Institute was in a town called Rechovet about a day's journey away from Nahalal. It was difficult to go and visit him.

Six months after I had been in the school, a Hungarian girl called Hannah Senesch joined the school. We became very good friends and helped each other with the difficult language. We had a lot in common and spent a lot of time talking to each other about what had happened in our lives a few years ago. Hannah joined the Hungarian Underground Movement after some few years at the school. She was sent to Hungary as a spy. Unfortunately she was caught by the Nazi's and sentenced to death. I was deeply grieved when I heard of Hannah's death. Ironically both of us did not have a strong Zionist upbringing.

Hannah proved to be a very courageous and determined person. When she was captured and taken prisoner by the Nazi she underwent severe interrogations. Her mother was brought to her aid at the eleventh hour before her death to persuade Hannah to give information about the Underground Organisation. I felt very proud of Hannah's bravery. Her death was a deep sorrow to me. In my heart I feel a deep rooted feeling of loyalty when I think of Hannah. She died a very brave death.

I shared a room with a Polish girl, Dwora who was older than myself and younger girl from Germany, Laura. I liked Laura ^{MORE} than Dwora. Dwora was ^A typical Polish girl who worked very hard and quickly. I was assigned to kitchen duty with Dwora and we clashed constantly. One occasion while working in the kitchen we were given the task of preparing blintzes, a type of pancake, that was a delicate task. The blintzes were for a group of visitors to be served for tea. Dwora worked very swiftly and I worked slowly and methodically. I noticed Dwora's pancakes were unsuccessful and she kept glancing at my plate and frying pan. Mine were perfect, I was much slower but my results were good. Pleased with myself I began to wash up my dishes and to my anger I realized that she had taken my pancakes and replaced them with hers. I started to protest loudly and the supervisor came to investigate. I took back my pancakes and refused flatly to relent. The supervisor ignored Dwora's protest for justice.

I was not a practical person, but the three months in the kitchen proved my efforts. I soon established a reputation for being the best person on campus to clean up the kitchen and polishing the pots. After my three months stint in the kitchen I was awarded a prize. It was a cookery book.

The Jewish holiday Tubi Sfat was approaching and we were all grouped together to discuss the preparation. I volunteered to write an article describing the life at the school and the meaning of Tubi Sfat. I was very happy when I took the article to Natan Chofshi. He was a well known writer living in Nahalal. He corrected my article and praised me very much for the originality and my style of writing. He adjusted and aided my Hebrew where necessary.

Our final examinations were approaching and I began to prepare my studies. I passed my exams. The Head of the Agricultural school was concerned about my future. She stressed her anxiety about employment for me. Although I was an excellent worker I was very slow and had difficulty in coping with the physical labour. She hoped I would find a suitable job, she jokingly suggested that I try to work for the High Commissioner in his botanical gardens.

I received my certificate for Agriculture after 2½ years. During that time I got to know the inhabitants of Nahalal and met up with a few Russian families. Before leaving Nahalal I went on a weeks holiday with Natan Chofshi and his wife. I felt related to them.

Palestine is a small country and I managed to visit a lot of different Kibbutzes and farming communities. After my week of touring we all returned to Nahalal

Eliezer Yorffe a distant relative of mine, wanted me to deliver a letter to a friend Ben Zvi (who later became the 2nd President) in ISRAEL. I stayed 5 (five) days with Ben Zvi and his wife Rachel. I was well received and enjoyed my visit. I travelled with Rachel to Tel Aviv. She took me to the Bureau of Employment for girls. While in Tel Aviv I decided to look up an address I had been given, I had heard that my brother Grisha's landlord from Kovno was living in Tel Aviv. I made contact with Macht's family and he was then a bank Manager. They were very excited to see me. It was wonderful to be amongst people from my home ground. They invited me to stay until I got a job and could manage on my own.

It was quite a difficult period in Palestine and jobs were hard to come by. I sometimes managed to find daily work. I saved up all my earnings for travelling expenses as I wanted to go to Rechovet at the Weitzmann Institute. Where I hoped to find my Professor from the Pharmaceutical Institute in Berlin.

I helped wherever I could in the Macht household. And as soon as I had enough money I bade them farewell and thanked them for their kind hospitality.

I was very pleased to see the Professor. It was as if I was meeting a close relative. The Professor offered to put in a recommendation for the Medicinal Plantation Section in the Givat Brenner Kibbutz. I decided once I had discussed my position about employment that I would take the Professor's offer.

I luckily found lodgings at Rechovet with a Lithuanian family from Popelian. After a few days I received confirmation that I was accepted for a position in Medicinal Plantation. When I was registered they gave me a place to sleep. It was a cottage and I had to share it with two girls.

On arrival at the cottage with my belongings, I found the place deserted and in a state of disorganisation. It was early in the morning and I was free for the day. I started to tidy the cottage. When my roommates arrived they were astounded and hardly recognized their shiny clean cottage. We introduced ourselves and became friends.

The next morning I had an appointment with the manager Benjamin Zaky. He discussed my future position. When he finished reading my references and the Professor's recommendation he decided to put me in the Medicinal Plantation Section.

The first two weeks I spent packaging flowers in the flower section for foreign export. I had to get up early every morning to cut the flowers, and prepare them. I proved myself capable of working during the two weeks.

I was then transferred to the Medicinal Plantation. Most of my colleagues were mature University graduates. At first I felt a little intimidated as my studies were incomplete. I would work in silence and listen with interest at the conversations of my colleagues. I felt at times inferior as they were intelligent. Sometimes in the course of a conversation I would have liked to contribute my knowledge but held it back.

FROM THE WEITZMAN INSTITUTE

Occasionally a doctor Bloch would come to the plantation to inspect the maturity of the herbs. Doctor Bloch was a highly qualified specialist who understood the growth of herbs and the importance of their active medical principle.

My work began to show rewards I was soon promoted to a senior position and then I was later put in charge of my section. I began to feel that all my efforts studying chemistry in Germany were beginning to bear fruit. One of the assistants in the ~~Plantation~~ was a young Italian Jew man called Yahuda, who held great affection for me.

Together we spent hours examining the chemical principles of our herbs. We exchanged a lot of our ideas and ideals. In the Kibbutz, life was sometimes enjoyable. We would have concerts or watch live entertainment in the evenings. But I did not agree on the constant three months rotation. We were given little money per month and free afternoon once a week. I looked forward to going to Tel Aviv to visit friends.

I was quite happy and began to almost enjoy the simplicity of the Kibbutz's social life. I would often get a travelling ticket to Tel Aviv. I earned very little money thus I was given a bit of pocket money. After six months the management approached me to become a member of the Kibbutz. I was reluctant to accept this way of life permanently (as permanent). I resented the lack of independence, if I need polish for my shoes I was given, my laundry was washed by the community, often I did not get my own clothes back and would have to contend myself with wearing an item that belonged to someone else.

My studies were incomplete, my life felt empty, I was achieving no advancement in my personal goals.

Oneday I was given an afternoon off from my duties. I decided to visit ^{some} friends in Rechovat, a town near Givat Brenner my Kibbutz. I caught the bus from the Kibbutz town. The journey was not far (long) and I was feeling free and happy. I got off the bus at the terminus and made my way towards the railway station. My friends lived a distance from the railway station.

I crossed the narrow street. As I turned the corner I felt that someone was following me. I looked around and noticed a soldier following me. I was on the outskirts of town and the street was deserted. I walked faster and kept looking back, the soldier still seemed to be following and he was catching up with me. In a blind panic I broke into a desperate run and after a few metres my foot slipped and I tumbled to the ground. I scrambled to my feet and started running again. I felt an agonising pain in my right wrist. My fear was greater than my pain. Without glancing back I raced furiously to my friends' house.

Arriving at my friends' house I was in a state of shock, my wrist throbbed furiously. They put my wrist into a bowl of cold water and I felt a bit relieved. They helped me into a bus back to the Kibbutz as I needed medical attention. I waved bravely goodbye to my friends. When I thought about my situation tears flooded into my eyes, my mouth trembled and I blinked back my emotions. My wrist was aching, I was worried about my work.

The Kibbutz doctor confirmed that my wrist was broken. I had to travel to Tel Aviv for a plaster cast. Arrangements were made for me to stay at the Beit Chaluzot (Y.W.C.A.). I was given a plaster cast for my arm and advised to stay in Tel Aviv for further medical treatment.

My first few days with my plastered arm proved to be cumbersome, after a while I adapted. Soon I was doing my own laundry and looking for daily work.

I made up my mind to resign from the Kibbutz and to look for work in Tel Aviv. I wrote out my resignation letter and posted it. On the same day I received a visitor. To my delight and amazement it was my friend Hannah Senesch. We were overjoyed to see each other. Hannah explained that she heard I was in Givat Brenner and went to visit me and discovered I was in Tel Aviv.

We went together to buy some food for lunch. Over lunch in my room we discussed our future plans. I told Hannah about my resignation and she told me she had left the Agricultural school in Nahalal. We parted company and I hoped

I went to the Employment Bureau and was recommended to an Agricultural School outside Tel Aviv. My duties were in the Irrigation Department. I was assigned to opening and closing off the main water pressure valves and recording the pressure time and calculations. It was a man's job, and I received a poor salary. Also, I was employed permanently. My duty was to be on stand-by and this made me feel resentful about the job. After three months I resigned.

World War II had begun. The atmosphere of comradeship and unity appealed to me. Young women were encouraged to enlist to the army for duty. It was very much a trend amongst the young girls to sign up.

Eagerly I went to the Recruitment Centre after my medical examination, I signed on. I was sent to Sarafand. I felt a great sense of purpose. The first two weeks were spent in a vigorous strenuous training. We were preparing ourselves to be sent to Egypt. We were then sent across the border to a desert town called Cassasine in Egypt.

E G Y P T

I & 2 & 3

In a blaze of unbearable dry, dusty desert heat, our train pulled into the Cassasin station. It was midday and I glanced apprehensively at the bleak almost dismal sight of the scattered little building of Cassasin. We were called into formation and taken to the military barracks. We were assigned to our sleeping quarters and instructed to prepare for our first parade a few hours later.

I was to sleep in a bungalow with three girls. We all unpacked our belongings and dressed for the parade. We were to be formally introduced to our commanding officer.

With the sound of the bugle we made our way towards the parade ground. Despite the dreadful heat we all felt nervous and excited. With enthusiasm we were all at attention in our formation, waiting for our commander to arrive. Moments passed and we were rewarded with the sound of a jeep approaching in a cloud of dust.

The colonel arrived and I was pleased to see a mature woman step forward. She inspected our group, stopping momentarily to chat and shake hands. I beamed with happiness when she shook my hand and pressed her silk handkerchief into my palm. We were then instructed to remain at attention during the introductory and welcome speeches.

To my dismay, I felt myself sway in a wave of dizziness. Beads of sweat ran down my body. I fought desperately to control myself. I inhaled deeply, squeezed my eyes closed and tried to concentrate on controlling myself. I felt as if my limbs were turning into liquid and I suddenly sank to the ground and into a dark oblivion. I awoke to find myself on the cold concrete floor in my bungalow with the military doctor bending over me. I felt a terrible throb in my forehead and my vision was blurred.

The next morning I felt a bit better and our instructor came to see me. I felt a dreadful blow when she told me I was not physically acceptable for further training in Egypt and would be sent back to Palestine as soon as possible. I listened in grave silence, my disappointment was almost uncontainable. When the instructor left our bungalow I lay and thought about my circumstances. Returning to Palestine would be dreadful. Employment was almost impossible, I had left my belongings with the Macht family. Returning would be a humiliation

and a defeat. Tears trickled down my cheeks and I just sobbed uncontrollably.

Later in the afternoon the colonel came in my bungalow. I smiled bravely and tried to hide my depression. My red swollen eyes must have spoken volumes. I felt an amazing admiration for this noble woman. With great effort, I made an interesting conversation with her. She never discussed my return to Palestine.

The next morning we were all told to pack and prepare for Ismailieh. To my surprise I was included in the move. My hopes were high, I quickly packed and was ready before my roommates. Our bus arrived and we formed a queue and began to board. I was called aside, my heart sank to my boots. The instructor told me I was to travel in the car with the colonel. My eyes lit up and I smiled radiantly. The journey to Ismailieh was wonderful. I sat in the car next to the colonel and she asked me about myself. I carefully related the past events. We struck an immediate understanding.

While in Ismailieh there was heavy fighting in El Allamein. We were given an intense three months first aid training course. It was my first experience and encounter with the war. We were in the front line and under direct German fire. Working in the hospital was one of my most rewarding jobs. I shall never forget the tremendous job and satisfaction.

Wounded soldiers were brought in and we cleaned and dressed their wounds. Some would be in a terrible state of shock and shaking uncontrollably. Once we had attended to their wounds and provided a warm nourishing drink it was a gratifying sight when they would fall into a secure sleep or relax. The battle in El Allamein was raging furiously and our casualties were increasing. We were given orders to withdraw, we feared the German invasion.

In Ismailieh we were taken to No. 13 Military General Hospital between Port Tewfick and Suez towns. Once again I travelled with the colonel in her car. She asked me about my education and I told her that I studied Pharmacy in Berlin. In Suez I was not assigned to duties in the hospital, for two weeks I cleaned and polished the colonel's living quarters. Out of gratitude I kept her room in immaculate order.

One day the colonel announced I was to travel with her to Port Tewfick. I never doubted her orders, I felt very secure under her command. I was taken to the British Headquarters in Port Tewfick and given my final discharge papers. I was astonished as the colonel had given me no indication that I

was to be dismissed from the army. In a state of shock I burst into tears, I felt a terrible humiliation. I went back with the colonel. My eyes were filled with tears and pain. She told me that she had made better plans for me. I was not military material. This provided some comfort to me and I accepted my plight.

I was immediately taken to the Anglo Egyptian Refinery. I was introduced to the Head of the Pharmaceutical Department and interviewed. I was tremendously relieved when I was accepted for a position. I was given the understanding that I would work in the Department for two weeks on trial and live in the military quarters. If I was acceptable, accommodation would be made for me in the Refinery quarters.

After a few days my confidence increased and I felt my work receiving impressive reviews. I enrolled for English lessons and began to study twice a week at night.

Once my position at the Refinery was confirmed, I was given a bachelor cottage amongst the Refinery Housing Quarters. I was given three afternoons off a week. I spent my free time preparing my English lessons. I received a lot of enthusiastic help from my English colleagues.

Three months past and I began to settle into my new way of life. I looked forward to Sundays. A truck would take a group of colleagues to the Red Sea. This was very enjoyable. We would play in the sea and build a human pyramid. As I was the youngest and the smallest, I was most of the times selected to form the top of the pyramid. Giggling and laughing I would climb to the top and we would all collapse into the water. I felt exhilarating and carefree, laughter was spontaneous and I began to almost forget a lot of my past grief.

I saw a lot of the colonel. When I was on a two weeks probation she would take me with her in the afternoon to meet refugees coming from Europe. Each time I went there I felt a rising hope that amongst the sea of faces I would recognise or find a relative. The colonel would encourage me to speak to the refugees and where ever necessary assist in a translation. Being amongst people from the continent made me feel less isolated.

Much later I was often called upon to enter the German Prisoners of war camp, which was under barbed wire, and asked to translate for the sick and wounded. I went to the Russian prisoners of war who had been admitted to the 13th

Military Hospital to translate to the English doctors for the sick Russian soldiers. Each visit left me feeling a mixture of loneliness and pride. I felt important and worthwhile. On one occasion a Russian soldier was drunk and shouting wildly, I was hastened to translate, and to my amusement I found the soldier shouting, " I am for Mother Russia and for Stalin."

My admiration for the Colonel grew, I was very much in awe of her noble and kind nature. I became a member of the International Red Cross under her advice.

Towards the end of my first year in Egypt, I approached the Russian Embassy in Cairo for assistance to establish any news about my family. I waited impatiently for weeks and I soon gave up my hope. I prepared a detailed memorandum of the whereabouts of my relatives and submitted it to the International Red Cross. Within a few months I was told that contact had been made in Leningrad with my half sister Berta and her son.

It appeared that she was afraid to reply. I was told to write to her. I myself eagerly awaited Berta's reply, she was pleased to hear from me. When I heard from her about the siege of Leningrad I sent her a food parcel. I later received a reply from Berta that my parcel was one of the first to reach Leningrad.

A year passed and I still had no confirmation about my family. I met a Polish soldier who told me where I could write to for a book of the Survivors from Lithuania and Poland. He told me that very few Jews from Lithuania survived. I wrote away for the book. The book arrived from Poland. I anxiously scanned the pages and found nothing. I felt desperate and gave the book to the Red Cross who were overwhelmed and very pleased. The International Red Cross was very thankful for the book and they made me an important member.

Shortly after my confirmation of employment with the Refinery I received a bursary to continue my studies at the American University of Cairo. Three afternoons a week I would go to the University. Time was important, that is why I used to run with my sandwich in hand to catch a lift at 2.00 O'Clock to be in time for my lectures. If I was lucky I would organise a return lift to the Refinery with that driver. At a given time I would meet the driver of the vehicle in a parking lot. If I had no return lift I would wait in the parking lot or I would walk down the main road and flag a lift. In Cairo it was common for students to rely on flagging down cars for transport.

I would more than often get a lift to Heliopolis, an upper class suburb outside Cairo. In Heliopolis there was a training school for Pilots. Most of the times the pilots would pass by in vehicles and stop to give me a lift. I enjoyed travelling with the pilots. Most of them were young flirtatious men who would provide amusing flattering conversation.

I joined an English course during the evenings. I eagerly enrolled and started studying seriously. The command of the English language was of vital importance. I was studying Pharmacy in English. My colleagues volunteered to correct my homework and I was very pleased, but sometimes I found their help difficult to get.

One evening before my lesson I was looking for a colleague to correct my work, I went in search of them and found them drinking in the Sergeant Mess Bar. Most of them were merrily intoxicated and unable to seriously help. I felt disappointed and ready to leave when a tall lean goodlooking fair haired Englishman introduced himself. His name was Sergeant John. He took my exercise book from me and began to correct my work. I felt so grateful and yet so attracted to this Englishman. I thanked him profusely for his help and I felt pleased when he suggested that he could help me again.

I looked forward to meeting John again. I began to pay careful attention to my appearance. Everytime I saw John I felt elated and warmed under his considerate manner. After our second meeting he invited me out for a walk and a drink. Each meeting brought us closer and I found myself falling in love with him.

John invited me to a dance. It was a wonderful memorable evening. I brushed my hair until it shone. I wore my best dress and somehow I felt like a glowing princess. I remember dancing in his arms, my feet hardly touched the floor as he expertly glided me around the floor. He held me close but gently in his arms. I felt the warmth of his body and the clean smell of his clothes.

John and I spent a lot of time together and after six weeks we were both in love with each other. I only realised I loved him after our first quarrel, I remember feeling angry and when I was alone I felt frantic with frustration and eager to patch up the quarrel. I felt almost sick from aggravation and worry. When John contacted me relief flooded through my mind.

After six months of constantly seeing John I was terribly upset when he

received orders to be moved to Eritria. He was an Engineer and his orders were to assist in construction at Eritria. Our parting was of sweet sorrow. We held each other in our arms and made plans to take leave together to visit John's mother in England. We exchanged photographs and promised to write to each other. I travelled with John by train to Cairo and from there he flew to Eritria in Ethiopia. I waved goodbye to John at the airport. And, I longed to go with him. It was a mixture of agony and ecstasy.

I returned home and continued to study and work waiting for a letter. A few months passed and I received no news from John. Christmas was approaching and I decided to send John a parcel. I went to the Military Administration Office in Suez to locate the address.

At the Administration Block I was taken to an office and told to wait. A man called me into his office and told me that John had died. I was utterly shocked. I just stared in silence when he told me that John died in a motor accident two weeks after his arrival in Ethiopia. I managed to control myself and asked for John's home address in England. I was asked to leave my address as information about John's family was not available at that moment.

I stumbled out of the building and went home. I felt a dreadful loss, my heart was filled with pain. I lay on my bed and stared unseeing ahead of me. I felt so miserable and lonely, I spent two days on my bed without sleeping. It was almost as if life had cheated me, everything I loved I seemed to lose.

Late in the afternoon on the second day someone knocked on the door. I opened the door. To my surprise I found the man from the Military Administration block standing in my doorway. He had brought me the address of John's mother in England.

I was surprised when this man asked me why I was still in bed, and, why I looked so miserable. Before I could reply he told me that his name was Jack and that he was married in England. Well, I explained to him that my friend had died and I loved him very much. He tried to explain that he had met lots of young girls and what could have happened if he had fallen in-love with all of them.

Jack forcefully persuaded me to get dressed and come out with him. I reluctantly agreed and when we got to his truck it was full of young people. He drove the truck to Suez and there we went to the Military Canteen and spent

the whole evening.

The following morning I returned to work and began seriously to concentrate on my studies. Jack would come to visit or take me for a walk but we never dated. My colleagues were concerned about my well-being and tried to encourage me to be strong. Time is a wonderful healing factor. A few weeks later I began to feel myself again.

John would always remain a very special person. I had a lot of admiration for the strength of his character, his sincere attitude to life, his vast general knowledge. In my heart I knew that I would not find those qualities easily in another man. Life in a military environment is often very shallow and fickle. People pass in and out of your life. Under the stress of war people are caught up trying to enjoy themselves to the full during their free time.

I wrote a letter of introduction and condolence to John's mother. I received a reply from her a few weeks later and we began to correspond regularly. In her letters I felt a bond of warmth and understanding.

At the end of my second year with the Refinery I was granted a complete bursary which enabled me to study full time. I applied for accommodation at the Y.W.C.A. I was given the understanding that I should return to the Refinery once I had graduated.

I received a letter from the International Red Cross. With mixed feelings I slowly opened the letter. Disappointment and shock flooded my mind. I reread in disbelief the contents of the letter. The Red Cross had found no trace of any survivors from my family. My world seemed to shatter into fragments. I started to sob uncontrollably. I felt a dreadful feeling of intense grief, loneliness and panic.

I ran clutching the letter in my hand to my colleagues in the Refinery. I burst into the laboratory and told them about the ^{loss of my family.} tragedy. Sharing my grief seemed to help unburden the tide of deep pain I felt. I shall never forget the wonderful warm support and comfort I received from my colleagues that day.

The days that passed were a blur. I went to work each day lost in deep depression. Gradually I began to accept my situation, my colleagues strengthened my will to live. Each one told me I was young with a long life ahead. My

parents would want me to achieve and not mourn them forever.

I moved to Cairo and into the Y.W.C.A. Being amongst my own age group again was wonderful. I had in the past year made very little contact with the students. I had saved some of my salary. Some of the girls from the Y.W.C.A. recommended to me a dressmaker. I decided to buy some material and have some clothes made. In my student group were daughters of Ambassadors and wealthy society people. I felt at times awkward and socially inadequate if any of my classmates spoke to me. They only asked me questions on Pharmacy because I was very good in that subject.

My Russian dressmaker introduced me to her distant relative. He was the Professor of Art at the University of Cairo. As he was Russian speaking he invited me to have a meal with his wife and family. I was truly overwhelmed when I arrived at his home. It looked like a palace and was filled with rich collectors' pieces of art and antiques. I took an instant liking to the family and thereafter I began accepting regular invitations to supper. I met a lot of the upper class society of Cairo through this family.

I was invited to art exhibitions and museums. I struck up friendship with an American man a few years older than myself. We were often invited to dinner or an art exhibition. As we frequently met at this beautiful house we became very friendly to each other. Eventually the American invited me out and we would go out and enjoy each other's company.

During weekends I would return to the Refinery. I looked upon the Refinery as my home, a refugee from the city. I prepared my lectures in my room and if I had a problem I felt confident enough to approach any of the senior dispensers for assistance. They had become my family. Sometimes I joined the crowd to go for swimming and picnicking. The senior dispenser, under whom I worked, and his fiancée would invite me to a little bar in Suez for a drink. I felt relaxed and happy returning to the Refinery.

I graduated from the University at the beginning of 1945. It was a tremendous moment. I had in my struggle achieved my goal. I returned to the Refinery and was employed on a monthly basis. I began to earn my own living.

Towards the beginning of spring in the year 1942, a news bulletin was broadcasted about the fall of Hitler. I was very affected by the news. Suddenly a flame of joy swept through me. I went to a party that night to celebrate the

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great news and I danced until 4.00 O'Clock in the morning. A feeling of freedom and exhilaration was within me. On that night I forgot my tragic past and bitterness, it was only for a night but my celebration was victorious.

Shortly after the fall of Hitler many of the English employees at the Refinery began preparations to return to England. With all the resignations our Department experienced a series of senior position changes. Our senior dispenser was promoted to management level. He approached me about my future at the Refinery. I was unsure when he proposed that I sign a five year contract. At that stage I felt very concerned about committing myself.

I heard through employees at the Refinery that a well known Jewish recruiting officer, Moshe Sharett was giving a lecture at the military barracks. I decided to attend. Since the fall of Hitler people began planning to return to their respective homes. I thought about Israel and I was worried about employment. I sat through that lecture and impressed by his speech about returning to help build a future in Palestine.

After the lecture I waited with a group of young people to speak to Moshe Sharett. I asked him about the job conditions. I briefly told him my qualifications and situation. I was surprised when he reassured me that I would have no difficulty in getting a good job. I told him I had a choice to sign a five year contract or return. Moshe Sharett asked me my age and I was 25yrs, after 5yrs I would be 30yrs old. Between now and the next 5yrs I should be thinking of marriage. He asked me if I would ever marry a non-Jewish man. I could not reply as I was not sure. Before he turned to speak to someone else he said to me, "Look after your Honour as a Jewess and I will see you in Israel."

A few days later I made up my mind to return to Palestine. I handed in my resignation and remained at the Refinery for one month. Most of my English colleagues had already returned to England.

I bought a train ticket to Jerusalem and as the time drew nearer I began to feel very sad leaving the desert, Cairo, the Refinery and my friends. I knew my decision to leave would be to my advantage later on. I was told that once people began returning to their countries employment would be difficult to obtain.

BACK

TO THE PROMISED LAND

I chose to go to Jerusalem. The thought of settling in the Holy City pleased me. On arrival in Jerusalem, I made my way to the W.M.C.A.(HOSTEL). To my surprise I met up with some of the girls from my former military training. Eager to see the city I joined some of the girls from the W.M.C.A. and we set off by foot. Everyday I used to go to the Employment Bureau to look for work. In the afternoons I explored and visited museums and Holy places. I became friendly with a young man who came along for company.

Getting a job proved to be very difficult. I was interviewed by an Administrator from the Educational Department. I was told that my testimonials were not enough. In Israel you had to know the French Codex as well. He then advised me to study the French Codex in order that I could find employment. I was dreadfully disappointed because my studies in Cairo were excellent and I had graduated with the British Pharmacopoeia.

I decided to leave Jerusalem and travel to Tel Aviv. My man friend joined me as he too found it difficult to get employment. We stayed for two days in a little town called Nachalat Yehuda and spent time visiting our old friends from Popelian.

In Tel Aviv I spent the first few days going to the Employment Bureaus. I felt concerned about my employment situation. I was living off my savings from Egypt. My confidence was low and with all the worry of unsettlement I began to feel ill. I made an appointment to see a doctor.

The doctor examined me and found nothing seriously wrong. The doctor asked me about myself. I told him my problem trying to get employment. I was happy when he recommended me to the Sick Fund. I was interviewed and given a job.

My senior colleague was a Czechoslovakian woman who resented me intensively. She felt that my acceptance for the vacancy was grossly unfair. People were on waiting lists at Employment Bureaus and I had just pushed my way into the vacant position. She made me uncomfortable at work. If a client came into the chemist and gave me a prescription to make up, she would very rudely snatch it away. I lasted five months in this job. Finally, I decided to leave Tel Aviv and go to Afula, a small town near Haifa. I stayed a few days visiting friends and later went to Haifa to look for a job.

I fell in love with Haifa. It is a very picturesque Harbour town. Walking through the busy streets I noticed the mixed community. I saw a lot of Arabs, and foreigners. Looking in the shop windows fascinated me, I saw a lot of oriental wares.

I walked through an open bazaar and the mystic of the middle east seemed to capture my spirit. The smell of sweet meats, pitas (a pocket of dough) and the powerful aroma of incense. The colourful scene around me made me forget my misery and I wandered around in oblivion. I looked at the clothes hanging from makeshift stalls, I saw beautiful brass ornaments, colourful carpets and lots of Arab children darting in and out the crowds. What interested me the most was the loud lulling oriental music and the hub of noise.

I wandered around the bazaar and decided to make my way towards the beach front. I walked towards the harbour and the streets seemed so wide. Palm trees were planted along in the streets.

I reached the beach front and sat down on the rocks to watch the tide wash up onto the beach. The waves were small, and just staring at the beautiful vast aquamarine coloured ocean seemed such a wonderful pleasure. I thought about my life, I felt alone and so responsible for myself because I just had no one to depend on. Getting a job was my main priority. I could cope if I was earning my keep.

I sat on the beach for a long time and when I got hungry I decided to find something to eat. On my way to Beth Chaluzoth which is accommodation for girls, I walked towards the bussiness centre of town. I went to a kiosk and bought a fallafal to eat. I enjoyed eating the pocket of dough filled with vegetables and spices.

Haifa is a town divided into three parts, namely, Downtown is the harbour area, Uppertown is the bussiness centre and Mount Carmel is an upper class suburb filled with beautiful luxuriously built villas. The view from Mount Carmel is most memorable to me and the gardens are subtropical and beautiful. I felt so impressed by my surroundings and began to hope that I could settle there.

The next day I went into Haifa city centre and went from Dispensery to Dispensery looking for work. Eventually I found a vacancy in a Pharmacy. My salary was small but I was relieved to have employment. My employers were a married

couple, Mr & Mrs Ruben. I liked the man but I was very weary of his wife. If a client came in I made up the prescription and when the Pharmacy was empty I was made to dust the shelves and repack or rearrange the display. I found Mrs Ruben's constant demands offensive.-I never had a minute to spare. I hid my feelings and tried to be as flexible as possible.

When I felt settled in my work I began to find my own way of making a living. I prepared my own meals in my room. At lunch time I went to a large canteen for employees where a hot lunch was served. I began to meet young people. On my day off I would go to the beach and swim. In the evenings I would join a crowd and go to Mount Carmel to a cafe and sit outside enjoying the splendid view and have a drink. I liked being among carefree laughing and joking young people.

I enrolled with the Pharmaceutical Society and became a member. On one occasion a seminar was held for launching a new product. Mr & Mrs Ruben were invited to attend but they sent me on their behalf. I attended the lecture and made acquaintance with a few Pharmacists.

Within a few months I began to attend the monthly social events of the Pharmaceutical Society. The evenings were a highlight in my life. Sometimes we would have a lecture or a party. I met a Doctor Retter who was the head Pharmacist at number 10 Military Hospital.

I got befriended with Doctor Retter. I was very interested in the nature of his work. Dr Retter told me about his intentions of resigning from the hospital and starting his own Pharmacy. I asked him if I could be able to get employment there. I was not intimidated when he told me that as a Jew and as a female my chances of employment were virtually against me. I decided to apply for the position regardless of the chances of being rejected.

I was given an appointment for an interview. The British Colonel who interviewed me was most impressed with my resume, qualifications and my past. I was very pleased when he offered me a job as a senior dispenser. Immediately I told him I was willing to try for the position but I had no experience in administration and never been responsible for keeping the Poison Book. The Colonel assured me that I would be assisted.

I had been with Mr & Mrs Ruben for about nine months and I was not sorry to leave the Pharmacy. While I was under Mr Ruben's employ I qualified French Codex.

Having qualified in Egypt paid itself off as advantageous at last. Palestine was a British Mandate Colony. Jordan was an allied country and soldiers were occupying Palestine from the Jordan Legion. Politically Palestine was unstable, clashes between Arabs and Jews was growing.

I was very happy in my job. The work and responsibilities were exciting. Most of the prescriptions that came in were for casualties from Haifa area. If I was not present to make up the prescription, people would wait till I returned. I felt that my work had gained trust. I gained a reputation for being able to make up an eye ointment to perfection. The eye specialist sent in all his prescriptions to the dispensary for my attention.

During this time fighting between the Arabs and the Jews had broken out. The Hostel I lived in was on the border of the Arab Quarters. An Underground Jewish Organisation called the Haganah who were struggling to fight for Jewish Independence moved into our hostel and established their secret Headquarters.

An irregular Jewish army called Gaffirim were in constant clashes with the Palestine and Syrian Arabs. At a place called Jechiam, Arabs were receiving intense military training from escaped Nazi German instructors. Unrest, violence and constant fighting was intense. The number 10 Military Hospital where I worked, was under British rule and we received casualties from both sides. But most of the casualties were on the Jewish side.

One evening on my return from work I met the matron of my hostel in the entrance hall and we by chance got onto the conversation of the casualties at number 10. Innocently I told her about the high percentage of Jewish casualties. After my dinner I went to my room and I found two men waiting for me. At first I was astounded and dumbfounded. This was my introduction to the Haganah and my emotional involvement began.

My position at the Hospital was of great value to the Haganah because I was able to give them information directly. My involvement with the Haganah intensified. They began to rely on me to get medicine for the wounded Haganah members.

The Haganah asked me to try to get ammunition. When casualties were collected from the fighting area, all the ammunition was brought with the casualties and would be confiscated. I was very apprehensive about getting guns for the Haganah, eventually I made a very good hair lotion and face cream for their

girlfriends in return for taking me along to the battle-field to collect the casualties.

With all the haste of getting the wounded off to the hospital I secretly managed to hide two guns in a sack. I felt enormously relieved and triumphant. My triumph was short lived when I proudly presented my guns to the Hagannah they were astounded that all I could get was two guns.

Through the Hagannah I received an invitation from the Mayoress of Haifa. The Mayoress gave me cigarettes and sweets to distribute to the Jewish wounded. However I also gave cigarettes to the Syrians who in return gave me valuable information that I passed on to the Hagannah.

My involvement with the Hagannah intensified and I began to understand the pressing need for ammunition. Once again I went with the Military police to collect casualties and I was able to collect a few guns and ammunition from the Syrians. It was a nerve racking experience as I risked my life and put my position at the Hospital in jeopardy.

Operating for an Underground Movement required a lot of courage and careful planning. I worked hard at the hospital, my reputation was excellent, I could'nt afford to make a mistake, that would cost me my job and expose the Hagannah.

On one occasion a young soldier was badly wounded and dying. He begged me to bring a Rabbi. I looked at the young boy's desperate face and I decided to get a Rabbi at all cost.

Clashes and fighting was intense and it was unsafe to enter the Jewish Quarters without Military Escort. When I tried to leave the hospital, I was ordered by security to spend the night at the hospital. In desperation I slipped out of the hospital grounds from the back. My urgency to get a Rabbi expelled any feelings of fear. I ran the distance often hiding or taking cover. Once I was in the Jewish Quarters I saw people hurrying home and the feeling of fear and unity seemed to be electric. I asked where I could find a Rabbi and with haste I was taken to the home of a Rabbi. Quickly, I told the Rabbi of the dying soldier. The Rabbi and I left immediately in a private Taxi for the hospital. The Taxi passed through the security at the Hospital unnoticed. Mostly British and only upper class people travelled in a Taxi. It was accepted that most of the Jews were too poor to afford such luxuries.

On my return to the hostel I felt elated and a sense of purpose. I felt no fear about the unrest. I was helping my Nation fight for their PROMISED LAND.

The British began to prepare to leave. I remember helping to pack Hospital equipment. I heard snatches of conversation that the Legion of Jordan were going to take over the Hospital. This information I quickly passed on to the Haganah who lost no time in arriving in force and occupying the Hospital.

I was given a flat in a gesture of gratitude from the Haganah. Accommodation was very hard to come by and I was overwhelmed with joy.

In 1948 the State of Israel was proclaimed. I joined in the celebrations that took place. All the Jews were wild with joy and triumph. The atmosphere in the city was electric and people thronged through the streets singing and dancing. After two thousand years we had finally won our PROMISED LAND.

The feeling of unity was strong. Men and women wept openly with joy, it felt wonderful to be FREE. Through the streets I could hear groups of people singing traditional Jewish songs. I went dancing that night. I found myself dancing with a large group of youths until the early hours of the morning. Round and round we circled the streets in traditional dance. My eyes were shining with excitement. Jews from all parts of Europe joined together forgetting their bitter past and pain.

JUST
MARRIED

I & 2

As the British were starting to pack up and return to England, I began to consider looking for another job as rumours were that once the British left the hospital would be evacuated. Through a colleague of mine I heard about a vacancy in the Haifa General Hospital. I applied to the Municipality and my application was accepted.

I gave one month's notice at No. 10 Military Hospital, during this time I was told that the position I had applied for at the General Hospital was taken. I heard that the Trade Union had placed a married woman in my position. I was told that I could contest. After finding out details about the woman from the Pharmaceutical Society, I withdrew from any further intervention. The woman was suffering from a severe overweight problem, her husband was a member of the Haganah and imprisoned in Ecko and she had two little children to support. The hours at the hospital were from 8 in the morning until two in the afternoon. Without prejudice I decided to let the woman have the job to support her family.

I found a temporary job in a Dry Cleaning establishment which entailed receiving and giving out dry cleaning. In many ways it was a blessing, the work was simple and I was under no strain and pressure. I badly needed the break from the dispensary. With little responsibility I felt relaxed and happy. In the evening I did voluntary work in a canteen for Jewish soldiers, sometimes I used to peel potatoes or make potato salad and serve to the table.

In the summer of July 1948, while serving to the tables in the Canteen I met Shlomo Zalk. We began to meet on a regular basis and I grew to like him more and more. As I got to know him better, I realized that he had very special qualities. He loved life, people and his outlook on life was full of light and joy. He was a quite soft spoken person, generous and he had very high moral qualities. He was a few years older than me and at the time Shlomo was out of work and a member of the Haganah. Shlomo was a qualified librarian.

Six months later Shlomo proposed to me and we were quietly married in a Synagogue on the 12th December. Shortly after our marriage I found myself pregnant. I did not feel well at all for the first month of my pregnancy. I felt tired and washed out. I gave up my job at the Dry Cleaning. Shlomo had

a good job at the Post Office, we were able to live on his salary.

One evening I was feeling particularly low and under the weather. I was resting on the sofa when my husband's brother arrived unannounced with two small children to visit Haifa. Shlomo was working late shift so I took them on my own. They wanted to see a bit of Haifa so I took them on a sight seeing tour. Three hours later and very exhausted we returned to the flat. My condition was worse and I was too shy to tell my brother-in-law. I made supper using up my rations which were given to pregnant women. Shlomo returned from work and hardly noticed my discomfort. He and his brother were pleased to see each other.

The next morning I miscarried, it was very distressing as Shlomo was not very experienced and offered little sympathy. I went to see the doctor and I was told that I was suffering from severe Annemia and had to be admitted to a Convalescent Home in Safat. The Doctor gave me a letter to the Sick Fund and I proceeded to the Convalescent Home. It took me several weeks to recover from my depression and slowly regained my health and strength.

On my return home I found my sister-in-law and her daughter visiting. At first I hid my disappointment and enjoyed her company but I was pleased when she returned home. A few weeks later another surprise visitor, a sister-in-law of Shlomo arrived with her son. She left her son in my care for two weeks. To feed a child was no problem we managed easily on our rations.

Meanwhile the Histadruth, the Jewish Labour Bureau opened a library and Shlomo applied for a position and was accepted. The quality of our lives improved. We were given free tickets to the theatre and the Symphony Orchestra and we began to go out often. We met a lot of interesting people, often Shlomo would help prepare material for someone's lecture and or advise parents on books for their children.

We were always invited to interesting lectures on culture and various other subjects. Presents were received from the Histadruth for the various Jewish holidays, and once a year they paid for a free holiday for us. All this made for a culturally rich and happy life.

Within six months I fell pregnant again. I went to the Doctor for a check up and she advised me to stay in bed at home and to rest. At the same time Shlomo's brother came to stay with us. He was on sick leave and decided to

spend his convalescence with us.

At first Shlomo insisted I stay in bed and he would go out for shopping and prepare the meals. After a while our home began to look unkept and Shlomo was leaving for the office each day without a clean shirt. Against my better judgement I got out of bed and began to resume my responsibilities as a house wife. A few days later as predicted, I miscarried.

I started to do voluntary Social Work to keep myself busy. I heard about a baby boy that was left on his own needing adoption. The young parents had been killed by the Arabs. I volunteered to fetch the child. Once I saw the little baby boy I began to think about adopting him. That evening I approached Shlomo about adoption. I was very deeply disappointed when he told me that he would have no feelings for someone else's child.

In the same street where we lived was a Medical Doctor from South Africa. We learned from him that my husband's uncle living in South Africa was alive and well. He gave us the address and Shlomo began to correspond with him. Our uncle sent us food parcels.

A few months later Shlomo's Uncle arrived from South Africa. When Uncle Max arrived in Haifa, Shlomo and his brothers went to the Airport to meet him. Our Uncle seemed to show his preference for Shlomo almost immediately. For the most part of his stay, he spent with us. This caused a rift of resentment amongst Shlomo's brothers. I pretended not to notice. We took our Uncle on a week's tour by car through Israel.

Our Uncle was an elderly bachelor. As he was a highly successful business man, he needed someone to help him because he was getting too old to cope alone. He was 80 at the time. Shlomo was his nephew and he thought that he was ideally suited to help him. He invited us to come to South Africa and stay with him.

We decided to take up our Uncle's offer. When Shlomo was a young boy, our Uncle financed his education, so Shlomo was delighted that he could show his appreciation by being of help to his Uncle. We were excited about moving countries.

It took about nine months to get the paper work complete. With a bit of regret I sold the flat given to me by the Haganah. We packed only our

clothing and a few of Shlomo's books. When I had asked our Uncle about what to bring to South Africa, he had put his arm around my shoulders and said, " I'll even accept you naked ".

Even though our Uncle was a bachelor and did not have a family life of his own, he radiated a lot of warmth, affection and understanding. I think he too was glad to have some family around him at last.

THE GOLDEN CITY

On our uncle's arrival back to Johannesburg he began earnestly to apply for our permanent residence in South Africa. Nine months later our permission was granted. When we received the permission to come to South Africa we asked our uncle to send us tickets from Haifa via Paris, to visit my husband's aunt and uncle whom he had not seen since childhood.

With great excitement we bade our friends farewell. A lot of our crockery, clothing and furniture we gave to Social Welfare. The more expensive pieces we gave to Shloma's brothers. We had sold the flat and completed all our affairs. I was particularly sad to say goodbye to Israel, but Shloma and I agreed to return one day.

We flew from Tel Aviv direct to Paris. I was very much in awe about flying. It was a magnificent experience to be up amongst the clouds soaring through the sky. We sat spellbound at the window.

Arriving at Orly Airport we were ushered through customs and met by Shloma's cousin. Being back on the Continent made me feel a little reminiscent of my student days. We drove down the Arch de Triomf and through the colourful city uncle and aunt's flat in one of the suburbs.

We were welcomed with excitement into their humble home. We spent the first night in their home. The next day we went for sight seeing and we very tactfully approached the subject of accommodation. As we would be very cramped in the flat, we agreed to look for accommodation nearby.

We visited the Louvre, Notre Dame' Cathedral and went up to Eiffell Tower. Our evenings were spent with our uncle and aunt discussing about their early days in Paris. Sometimes we would all watch the Television and listen to the lovely husky voice of a French singer on the Television. I felt alive and exhilarated by the hub of life in a city. Before we left we managed to see a ballet and we found a Kosher restuarent where we took the aunt and uncle for a meal.

Leaving Paris was like leaving a dream. I was very curious about travelling to Johannesburg. We left Paris in the evening and arrived at the Jan Smuts Airport late the following afternoon. I was eager to see Johannesburg. While the plane circled the airstrip to land, we were amazed at the hundreds of little blocks of houses and the beautiful green vegetation.

We landed and were taken through customs. We were met by our uncle Max, his manager and wife. We were invited to the manager's home for supper. After our supper uncle Max took us to his flat in Parktown, an upper class suburb in Johannesburg.

I was overwhelmed at the luxury of his beautiful flat. It was a big two bedroomed flat, elegantly furnished with beautiful colourful persian carpets and good antique furniture. I looked around appreciatively at what was to be my home for a while.

The next morning after breakfast my husband was taken to the factory. The first weekend we set out to see the city. As we drove out to the street, I was struck by the beautiful avenue with jakaranda trees on either side of the street. A carpet of purple flowers lay on the alleys.

Uncle Max began to tell us about the city of Johannesburg that it was built on a gold mine. We did a tour of the city centre showing us the buildings. We were overwhelmed by the number of colourfully dressed black people and the general sophistication of Johannesburg. We also visited a beautiful scenic botanical garden called the wilds, which provided a panoramic view of the city. We drove onto a beautifully made lake called Zoo Lake in the heart of Johannesburg. We walked around the lake.

This was the beginning of a new way of life both to my husband and myself. He had been a librarian of a public library in Israel and I was a trained pharmacist. Now my husband was to join his uncle who had a very large electroplating business. He had started in life as a locksmith and then went on to Sheffield in England where he learnt the electroplating business. There was no need at this stage of his life - he was now nearly eighty and a very rich man - to work with his hands but on the rare occasions when he did so, his electroplating work was of such high quality that people were loud in their praise of him.

Now, I, who from the age of sixteen until that time had been engaged in preparing for and pursuing a profession, had very little experience of domesticity. Both my husband and I, living in Israel had to work and when I arrived home at night the evening meals were hastily prepared.

When we came to Johannesburg and lived with my husband's uncle, he naturally expected me to be fully conversant with all aspects of Jewish cookery. This came both as a surprise and shock to me as I supposed that his cook knew his tastes and was catering for him. However, he wanted Jewish home cooking done by a woman and felt quite sure I could do this. I won't pretend that was something easy for me to do but I am a person who can quickly turn my hand to anything and in a short space of time, my cooking more than satisfied him.

My husband had to face an even more difficult task. He was to learn a totally new line of work and the white staff of my uncle were watching him with suspicion and jealousy. They were aware that my husband would probably succeed his uncle as the owner of the firm and then who knew how secure their jobs would be; so they lost no opportunity in poisoning him against my husband and exaggerating every little error he made in the hope that he would see that my husband was quite unsuitable for this work.

As if this were not enough, my husband's brothers in Israel had decided in their minds that my husband was on to a very good thing and why should they not also come to South Africa and work in their uncle's firm; the prospect seemed a very good one. So letters marked " Private " went to our uncle Max written in Yiddish. He passed them on to us to read to him and so we knew exactly what was going on. They started off with the suggestion that one of their sons should come to Johannesburg and be taught the business. In this way he would keep them informed in Israel as to what was going on and just how influential my husband had become in the business.

Both I and my husband did our best to ignore this atmosphere of intrigue both inside the firm and outside from Israel, meanwhile doing our best to provide a happy home atmosphere for Uncle Max. Then illness suddenly struck and he was taken to hospital when we learnt that he had cancer.

This was kept from the staff but somehow it leaked out and unbeknown to us. So he came out of hospital and a few days later one of the two managers came to his flat and asked him to accompany him in a car as his presence was required at a meeting. He was very weak and I was glad the manager was with him. He took Uncle Max to the house of the firm's accountant, where the other manager of the firm was also waiting.

It was then put to him by his two managers, in the presence of the man who

had been the firm's accountant for many years, that due to his illness he was no longer able to control the firm; his nephew, my husband, lacked the necessary experience, and if he did not agree to appoint his two managers to be on the board of directors they would immediately resign and this firm which was everything to Uncle Max, his own baby, would then fold up.

So he agreed to sign a paper making his two managers directors, and his signature was duly witnessed by two women, one being the accountant's wife and the other a lady who was a boarder in their house.

A few weeks later the two managers, now both directors in the firm, called another meeting again at the accountant's house, they fetched Uncle Max, and at the meeting where he was now outnumbered two to one they voted for the dismissal of my husband to which Uncle Max, now both very old and weak from illness, had no option but to agree.

Meanwhile, this came like a bombshell to us. We had been kept in complete ignorance about how this had transpired.

My husband became ill through all this. Here we had both given up permanent jobs in Israel, had no money to return there and, besides, even if we could have gone there, it would have been almost impossible to find jobs in the new State of Israel, which was just getting on its feet.

Uncle Max sometimes went to his office in the firm's building but again sometimes his illness kept him at home. On one occasion, when our uncle could not go to the factory as he was unwell he tried to teach me how to cut key levers but I was unable to master it and he got very cross and shouted at me. I was with him all the time and although sometimes he was quite coherent.

This upset me very much, so I went one day to the hospital where I was advised to go to the South African Red Cross where they said I would find very congenial people and work to take my mind away from my worries. This is exactly what I did find there; wonderfully friendly people in marked contrast to the people of the hard commercial world of Johannesburg.

The South African Red Cross even trained me in Occupational Therapy. Our uncle came to depend more and more on me and could hardly bear my being away from his presence for a moment, but I gave him to understand that although I

was prepared to help him in every way possible I still could not interrupt my going to the Red Cross.

His condition went from worse to worst and one day he passed away in my husband's arms.

After his death, I and my husband decided to get legal advice on the question as to how his late Uncle had been ousted from his position of sole owner of his own firm and was compelled to agree to my husband's dismissal.

It took practically two years from the death of our Uncle until things became stable again.

The day when the case was due to come to court duly arrived but some ten minutes before the case started the lawyers of the two directors appealed to the judge for a postponement, saying that they had now decided to seek a settlement with my husband's lawyers.

The settlement was finally worked out by counsellor Kentridge (who is now a well-known state council but was at that time just a junior); In terms of this settlement, my husband became a director of Sheffield Electroplating and also an employee of the firm.

ESSHILL
AND
MIGNON COURT

I & 2

Once all the paper work of Uncle Max's estate was complete it was time for Shloma and I to set up our own home. With the money our Uncle left us we bought two blocks of flats with a partner. We chose to live in the one building called Esshill Court. There was a total of eight flats, four in each building. I agreed to run and control the maintenance of both buildings

Our flat was on the second floor and apart from being spacious it was very comfortable. Shloma and I inherited a lot of our Uncle's furniture and carpets. The next few weeks I found myself very busy unpacking and decorating the flat. After much debating Shloma and I had a few alterations done to some of the rooms. We had a wall knocked down and a sliding door fitted. I was very happy to be settled.

I found a very honest and friendly maid Gertie, to help with the cleaning and cooking. Shloma had a very friendly personality and soon we had a large group of friends. I found myself enjoying the preparations for dinner parties and I was never too tired to go out in the evenings to theatre, dinner, opera or ballet.

We were financially very comfortable and each year we took our annual leave overseas. We became well seasoned travellers. Each year we planned a trip to visit a country we would try to stop off at Paris.

My spare time I spent doing a lot of charity work. I got involved in the Social African Feeding Scheme. This was an organisation that provided assistance to the very large underfed population of black people. Food in South Africa was of no shortage. A vast majority of the black people who flocked to the cities to work were originally very rural people with almost no education. Their dietary habits were appalling. Our main task was to reach the children and provide some small form of nourishment.

I was also involved with the Red Cross and my work became a great source of satisfaction. I worked with the blind and mentally retarded people and, seldom missed my sessions with the people under my care. Having no children of my own, I grew to enjoy caring and mothering these helpless people.

As the years slipped by Shloma and I found ourselves growing more and more content with our way of life. Living in South Africa was very comfortable

and we became very fond of the country. Every Friday night I would according to our Jewish custom, invite a lonely person to supper. Also, every passover and New Year we regularly entertained about thirty people.

We had no problems at the factory. Shloma had a great passion for books and would often support and assist young aspiring writers.

After I lost my husband, I was forced to attend to our affairs immediately. The winding up of Shloma's estate seemed a terrible burden. Adjusting to life without Shloma seemed so difficult. I found a lot of comfort going to the Red Cross and helping people. I was very much involved either with the maintenance of the building or with Shloma's estate.

My religious beliefs had changed dramatically. I stopped going to the Synagogue. I could not bring myself to light the candles on a Friday night. Loneliness began to shadow my life. Slowly I began to pick up the pieces of my shattered life. I began to accept social invitations. I looked forward to the Symphony Season to drown my thoughts in two hours of music. When a ballet or opera came to the theatre I made every attempt to attend. Slowly I began to fulfil my religious beliefs. My faith gradually returned.

After a long time had passed and being totally alone, I would feel peace return to my heart and I would close my eyes and think about the wonderful memories of Shloma.

Ten years have passed since that fateful day that I lost my dearest husband. Once again I am travelling to Israel to share and honour the memory of my beloved with our friends.

I arrived in Tel Aviv and was met at the airport by friends. I have grown older and time has touched me lightly, I am still a capable person. After a welcome dinner with my friends I went to bed early to prepare myself for the memorial service the next day.

Standing alongside Shloma's grave I listened to the moving speech the Rabbi made about Shloma. My eyes were filled with tears of sadness and I fought to regain my composure. When the ceremony was over I motioned with my hand that I wished to remain alone. Once everyone had left and all was quiet I closed my eyes and spoke aloud. " Farewell my darling, I have brought you home to rest in peace. Shloma I will always remember you. To my dearest parents and family, I don't know where your graves are but rest in peace. I am all that is left and all I have is a beautiful memory to keep. "

This letter is from Professor Dov Noy of Hebrew University, a friend of Hannah, and my friend too.

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11/3/86 2

The Hebrew University,
May 10th 86 Jerusalem

To: Hanna Zalk, South Africa,
From: Dov Noy.

Subject: Script of your book.

Dear Hanna, Shalom.

As I promised, I am writing to you following our conversation.

I am bringing up, in writing the words which I said to you.

I read all the chapters with great interest. The fact that I did not stop reading up to after midnight, though it was after a long tiresome day is a proof that a person like me finds much interest in the history of your life.

It seems that it is good to deepen friendships, and even if I know you and owing to our conversation and correspondence in the past I cherish and appreciate you. So the look into your past with all your dynamic and your activity is enough to widen the knowledge and the writing field as well.

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and owing to the knowledge about your struggles increases my appreciation of you.

To a certain extent symbolizes the history of your life the fate of our nation, principally in the period between the two world wars, at the period of the holocaust and the struggle in Israel and the forty (40) years of our state. Besides of your being a homeless wanderer from place to place and also your stations are interesting and meaningful.—

Ukraine, Lithuania, Germany, Sweden Israel, Egypt and South Africa.—

In every place you are active for other.

When your personal Talents from one side and the memory of your parents and the heritage of the Jewish culture from the other side accompany you and influence your actions.

I am sure that the adaptation of the book to Hebrew would reach our youth and would present for

3

them an interesting life-story
in which are joined together activity
in the "Haganah", contribution to
the establishment of the State of
Israel and concern for its wellbeing
and the wellbeing of the Jewish
society in general wherever they are.

I hope you will find a publisher
to your book.

With greeting
Dov.

